



THE INDEPENDENT

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WEATHER: Heavy showers with some sunshine

(IR4Sp) 40p

DEBORAH ROSS INTERVIEW

SUGGS: THE
MADNESS OF MY
YOUTH

MEDIA+

CAN COSMO
GIRLS REALLY
HAVE IT ALL?

ARTS

PRINCE
TAKE
MAMA24
PAGES OF
SPORT

Labour target better off to raise billions in tax

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor
Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

Gordon Brown, Chancellor of the Exchequer, is expected to increase taxes for the better-off in his July Budget.

While Labour said in its manifesto that there was no question of increasing income tax rates, Mr Brown was careful not to tie his hands when it came to changing tax allowances.

The key loophole in the manifesto says the principles to be applied to tax policies will be "fair and be seen to be fair". The prime target for attack will be the fact that while millions of employees are on Pay As You Earn, hundreds of thousands of better-off people live on a "Pay If You Like" principle, strongly attacked in a Labour policy paper, *Looking to the Future*, in 1990.

It is estimated that more than £1bn could be raised by putting a £10,000 annual limit on the tax allowances that can be claimed by any one taxpayer. In 1992 635,000 taxpayers claimed total allowances and reliefs of more than £10,000.

Other options include restricting reliefs to the 25p income tax rate rather than the 40p top rate. Some Labour sources have their eyes on the £2,400 mortgage interest relief, the £22,200 relief for personal pension contributions, and the £28bn relief for occupational pensions.

Mr Brown's first Budget, expected on 1 July, will announce a windfall tax on privatised utilities and a reduction in VAT on domestic fuel to 5 per cent.

The money raised from the windfall tax is earmarked for the "welfare to work" schemes to get about 250,000 young people into jobs.

Beyond those pledges, the Budget is likely to start shifting the burden of income tax with moves towards a starting rate of 10p for the low-paid. That could be financed by a clampdown on tax relief loopholes.

But yesterday's drama, as the new Government started to take shape, was centred on the appointment of Peter Mandelson to the post of Minister



Family worship: Tony Blair, the Prime Minister, leaving the St Joan of Arc Catholic Church in Highbury, London, after Sunday Mass. Photograph: PA

blair's britain

Welfare drive,
page 5Mother and son's reunion,
page 6
Galaxy man goes to
church, page 5join Mr Brown at the Treasury. Geoffrey Robinson, the millionaire businessman, owner of the *New Statesman*, and MP for Coventry North-West, becomes Paymaster General, with responsibility for expanding the Public-Private Finance Initiative. Helen Liddell, an economist and MP for Airdrie and Shotts becomes Minister of State at the Treasury.

Doug Henderson, MP for Newcastle North, was appointed Minister for Europe yesterday. He hit the ground running last night with direct briefings from the Prime Minister and Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, before embarking on his first ministerial negotiations in Strasbourg today. Mr Cook said yesterday: "At today's meeting, Britain will take the first step towards signing up to the Social Chapter."

Ministers to be appointed today are expected to include former education and employment spokesman Stephen Byers; former health spokeswoman Tessa Jowell; former employment spokesman in opposition Ian McCartney; former treasury spokesman Alan Milburn; and election campaign spokesman Brian Wilson.

Interest rate fears, page 17

latitude day-to-day, but what they will be implementing and what they will be adhering to is the agreed programme of the party.

He said Mr Blair would want to create a "strong centre in government, so that all its various arms and departments have a very clear sense of their own direction, how they are go-

ing to form part of the overall picture, so that we can very rapidly start implementing and delivering what we stood for and what we pledged to the British people." The tone of Mr Mandelson's remarks is certain to annoy Cabinet ministers.

Mr Blair yesterday made three other ministerial appointments, two of them to

End of era as Zaire's despot Mobutu agrees to stand down



On his way out: President Mobutu feels the heat yesterday.

Mary Braid
on the SAS *Otunyoka*

The trademark leopard-skin hat was the same, and he wore the same thick black glasses. But President Mobutu Sese Seko, 66, despot of Zaire and once one of Africa's most secure strongmen, looked most uncertain and uncomfortable. His 32-year reign is coming to an end, and the fate of his vast nation - 10 times the size of Britain, with a population of 44 million - hangs in the balance.

Trapped in the blazing media lights on board the South African ship *Otunyoka*, Mr Mobutu picked the sticky tape attaching his name and title to the table-clothed desk. A few feet away on the other side of South African president Nelson Mandela sat Laurent Kabila, sleek and relaxed in the glare, the leader of the rebel army which has seized most of Zaire and is now advancing on the capital Kinshasa.

"President Mobutu knows he is going and he is going soon," said an aide of UN envoy Mohamed Sahnoun yesterday just before talks began. "It's just a question of going with some dignity." Some might suggest that with his bank accounts, his house in the South of France, his years

town has fallen to Mr Kabila's Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire, but until now Mr Mobutu had remained defiant.

Yesterday he began what he insisted he would not do: negotiating with the rebel king. And in their first joint communiqué, Mr Mobutu offered to relinquish power. Of course, the wily and corrupt politician attached some strings. But according to South African government sources last night Mr Mobutu had agreed quietly and secretly to stand down. His imminent departure was the one thing the warring sides agreed on at an event that was more important for its symbolism than its substance. An era was coming to an end.

"President Mobutu knows he is going and he is going soon," said an aide of UN envoy Mohamed Sahnoun yesterday just before talks began. "It's just a question of going with some dignity." Some might suggest that with his bank accounts, his house in the South of France, his years

of corruption, dignity was the last thing he deserved.

The ship was originally suggested as a piece of diplomatic legerdemain because the warring sides could not agree on a mainland African venue. Yet the meeting only took place after two days of farcical mutual avoidance.

On Friday, President Mobutu, stricken with prostate cancer, was almost prevented from taking part by the difficulty of boarding. The *Otunyoka* then set sail for its rendezvous point with Mr Kabila in international waters. But the rebel leader came up with a string of new objections. President Mandela and his deputy, Thabo Mbeki, spent all day Saturday trying to bring the two men together. It took an outburst of temper from President Mandela on Saturday night to make the meeting happen. And so, yesterday afternoon, the dictator and the rebel at last met in a tiny cabin five decks below the bridge.

They outlined positions which remained far apart. Mr Kabila demanded that Mr Mobutu hand over power to his rebel alliance and allow it to decide who forms an interim transition authority. He said he had ordered his troops to stop their advance on Kinshasa, but he made it clear there would be no ceasefire until Mr Mobutu stood down. For his part, Mr Mobutu said he would only step down when a ceasefire had been agreed, a transmission of authority established and elections held for president.

The two sides agreed to meet in eight to ten days, at a venue yet to be decided. But a South African aide said that behind the scenes, there had been more progress.

The international community is desperate to prevent a bloody battle for Kinshasa and avoid the possible disintegration of Zaire. But Mr Kabila's forces seem unstoppable; and on yesterday's evidence, Mr Mobutu is finished.

Zaire revolution, pages 10 and 11

Hague set to snatch Tory crown from heavyweights

Anthony Bevins
and **Fran Abrams**

certain to stand, along with Mr Hague, Stephen Dorrell and John Redwood.

Mr Clarke promised free votes on all major European issues yesterday. "The troubles of the last two or three years have entirely been caused by Europe. It is a kind of cancer at the heart of the party. Some people are quite obsessed by it if they are quite incapable of agreeing with it," he said.

He did not expect to serve in a shadow cabinet headed by Mr Redwood, the Euro-sceptic former Welsh Secretary, he added.

Mr Redwood said the statement was just electioneering. Mr Clarke's "enormous style and aplomb" would be welcome in a Redwood cabinet. "I think Ken is saying that because he thinks that I may have a lot of support and he obviously wants to knock that support in his own interest, because he's a candidate and he's a bruiser," he said.

It was "very likely" he would stand, he added.

Mr Lilley sought to present himself as a unity candidate, despite his Euro-sceptic views, but said the idea of free votes on Europe was "not realistic".

Mr Dorrell, speaking on GMTV, would not say whether he was going to run, but added: "This is an election process that is going to take some weeks and it's sensible to spend a few days thinking about the personal implications of what is potentially a prime ministerial post."

Mr Heseltine was expected to stay in Hertford General NHS trust until at least tomorrow, though his family said he was suffering from mild angina and his condition was not serious. He was not being allowed to watch the Conservative leadership race on television but was receiving visits.

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Irish government steps up pressure for IRA ceasefire

The Irish government yesterday stepped up pressure for a new IRA ceasefire in the wake of Labour's landslide election win in Britain. The call came from Proinsias de Rossa, the senior Cabinet minister who heads the Democratic Left, part of John Bruton's three-party coalition administration. Mr de Rossa said all the pieces were falling into place to move forward the Northern Ireland peace process. But, he added, the crucial missing element was an IRA ceasefire. Mr de Rossa urged Sinn Fein's two new Westminster MPs, the party's leader Gerry Adams and its senior strategist Martin McGuinness, to exert all possible pressure on the IRA to "call an immediate, total and unconditional cessation of all violence".

Speaking ahead of an expected first post-election meeting in London this week between Prime Ministers Tony Blair and Mr Bruton, Mr de Rossa said: "A new Labour government in Britain, with an authoritative political mandate, a new and energetic Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in Mo Mowlam, and the impressive mandate won by David Trimble and the Ulster Unionist Party in the elections, are all grounds for optimism."

Channel blockade may be called off

Freight companies and ferry operators were hoping yesterday that Bank Holiday disruption of cross-Channel routes could be averted as French lorry drivers reached a deal with government officials just hours before a threatened ports blockade.

A P&O Ferries spokeswoman said they had been told that most of the unions had reached agreement with the French government and the planned day of action looked likely to be called off.

"One or two unions are still planning to strike [today]," she said. "But we are optimistic that they will reach agreement and that there will be no blockade ... We are telling day-trippers to turn up as usual." The lorry drivers were planning to strike over pension and retirement rights and had threatened to blockade all the main French ports today. A similar strike last year brought chaos to the Continent and Britain. Freight operators are still waiting for compensation from the French government.

TV star 'Flipper' dies in Miami



Bebe, the last of seven bottlenose dolphins (left) that starred in the *Flipper* television series, has died. She was 40.

The dolphin died "of old age" last week at the Miami Seaquarium where she was born in 1956. Atlantic bottlenose dolphins typically live 25 to 35 years. MGM-TV's *Flipper*, a spin-off from two films, aired on NBC from 1964 to 1967, with the dolphins playing alongside actors Brian Kelly, Tommy Norden and Luke Halpin.

Football fans sing to a holy tune

It was a friendly fixture if ever there was one. For the thousands of supporters who turned out at yesterday's match at Everton Football Club in Liverpool were all cheering on the same side.

And what is more, they were singing hymns. It was, in fact, a recording of BBC1's *Songs of Praise*, entitled "Mersey Glory" and set for broadcast on 18 May. Among the hymns sung from the terraces were *Ah,ide with Me*. Mine eyes have seen the Glory, and Amazing Grace. It was the programme's second fixture at a football club; the first was held in September 1994 at Old Trafford, home to Manchester United.

Clare Gammie

Wallabies warm to Britain

Wallabies, the sun-loving marsupials from Australia, are in the midst of a population boom due to the variable British weather. The warmer climate has encouraged wallabies brought over here in the Sixties to breed and become neighbours with British fauna. One wildlife expert said: "Wallabies come from arid semi-desert areas and cannot normally survive in cold countries. Their success indicates how much the British climate has changed in the past few years." There are believed to be at least a dozen colonies, varying in size from 12 to 120 animals. Fourteen wallabies were recently found feeding near Middleton in Teesdale on the County Durham-Cumbrian border. The creatures, a popular target for game hunters, have also been reported in the vicinity of Newcastle Airport.

Winning Lottery numbers

One winner scooped the £9,512,277 National Lottery jackpot on Saturday, with the winning numbers 29, 40, 35, 20, 06 and 31. The bonus ball was 21.

people



David Helfgott: Performances have been lauded around the world (Photograph: Kalpesh Lathigra)

Helfgott's wife hits back as pianist gets ready to shine

The David Helfgott show flew into Britain yesterday with a pre-concert performance by his wife Gillian, who told the press how her husband's first wife had given him the two-and-a-half unhappiest years of his life.

The Australian pianist, made famous by the film *Shine*, was rehearsing in London in preparation for his sold-out concert at the Royal Festival Hall today.

Helfgott, who was unknown in Britain this time last year, now has an album at the top of the classical charts, following the Oscar-winning account of his mental breakdown and conflict with his father.

Since then, his sister brother – and yesterday his first wife – have all given interviews saying the film and the supposed battle with his father are travesties of the truth.

Helfgott allowed journalists to sit in on one of his final rehearsals as he casually performed his signature tune, Rachmaninov's third piano concerto.

Characteristically stooped, the musician muttered unceasingly to himself as he played the piece, which the film has already made a best-seller in 12 countries.

Shoulders hunched, he smiled and sang to himself while playing Liszt, as he apparently does on stage. He then stopped, and shook hands with all the cameramen.

Next door, his wife was rebuffing critics of her husband's life story. And she rebutted them most vigorously.

She said: "With *Shine* David was able to share the story of his pain. He loved his father very much and

his father loved him, but perhaps not wisely. The film has given him this new sense of self-awareness, self-respect and strength, and he is surrounded by love.

"I have been referred to as controlling David. Who ever wrote that, I just wish they could give me some clues how to do it."

Asked why his first wife was written out of the script of *Shine* and not mentioned in Helfgott's biographical highlights, issued to the press, yesterday, she responded: "It was probably two-and-a-half of the unhappiest years of David's life. When she had an operation she put him in a psychiatric hospital. When she came to collect him he told her he would rather stay in the hospital."

"I think it is a fair indication of the standard of the marriage."

His manager announced that Helfgott had already been greeted by immeasurable packed concert halls and 72 standing ovations during his tour and said he would be returning to England for more later this year.

In what promoters are billing as "the biggest engagement of his life", Helfgott will be back in October to play the Rachmaninov piece again at the Royal Albert Hall, with the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

In 1970, after performing the same music at the same London venue, illness descended upon Helfgott and he retreated to spend years in mental institutions. It was only in 1984 that he returned to the concert platform.

David Lister

Ringo's derelict birthplace could be listed building

Such is the power of celebrity. Ringo Starr's birthplace is little more than a shack: corrugated iron covers the doors, the roof leaks and the toilet is smashed – but English Heritage said yesterday the derelict Liverpool terrace house could become a listed building.

For the rundown former home of the Beatles drummer (right, with his wife, Barbara) at 9 Madryn Street could be considered to be of special "historic interest", according to officials.

An application would be considered "very seriously" and, if successful, would make it the first birthplace of a living person to be listed. The house in Toxteth was bought for £13,200 at an auction in March and the new owner, Cliff Cooper, said he wanted it as a lasting tribute to the band.

Mr Cooper, who had not seen the house before he bought it, said: "It's in a terrible state, the ceiling is falling in, and it's quite a sight, but the aim is to get it listed."

English Heritage, which assesses listings claims, said Ringo's house was likely to be a ground-breaking case.

The impact of the Beatles on late 20th-century British culture is so huge, I would have thought it was an interesting case and we



would look at it very, very seriously indeed," said Martin Cherry, head of listing. "Since it raises a particular issue, to commemorate people who are still alive, we would probably take it to one of our internal committees."

The Secretary of State for Heritage considers a building for listing if it displays "important aspects of the nation's social, economic, cultural or military history", according to English Heritage.

The auction catalogue claimed that baby Ringo was hidden in a cupboard under the stairs during an air raid.

Mr Cooper, managing director of World of Music shops, said the house would be let. He hoped to have a plaque on an outside wall showing its significance, but promised not to increase the rent because of its past.

Celebration as gypsy honoured

Thousands of gypsies danced and sang flamenco in St Peter's Square in Rome yesterday to honour Cefinio Jimenez Malla, the first gypsy to be beatified by the Catholic church.

"He died for his faith", the Pope said in a ceremony broadcast yesterday on Spanish television. The gypsies then presented the Pope with an ebony stick as a symbol of honour.

Jimenez Malla, known as El Pele, was shot dead at the age of 75 during the Spanish Civil War in Huesca, Aragon, in August 1936. He refused to renounce his faith in exchange for the promise of freedom from a friendly anarchist captor, said Monsignor Giovanni Chei, president of the Pastoral Commission for Migrants and Itinerants.

Chefino rejected the offer, knowing the price he would have to pay. With his rosary in his hand, he shouted "Long live Christ the King" and faced his martyrdom.

The gypsy community has mixed feelings about El Pele's progress to sainthood. Whilst proud that one of their number has at last been honoured, some regard yesterday's gesture as a long overdue atonement for past injustices many gypsies feel they have suffered at the hands of the church.

Elizabeth Nash

Top Gun pilot feared exposure of gay affair

Craig Button, the US Air Force pilot who crashed into a mountain range for no apparent reason, was reportedly afraid that his gay affair with another pilot would be made public.

Leaked details of reports compiled by accident investigators indicate that Captain Button feared that he would be dismissed from the military because of the relationship.

During a training exercise last month, the 33-year-old, who had followed a childhood dream to become a USAF "Top Gun", broke formation with two other tankbuster A-10 aircraft and flew off towards mountains in Colorado.

For two weeks, the American authorities were unable to trace the plane and could only report that

the aircraft appeared to have vanished without a trace.

The wreckage of the F/A-18 jet, which was loaded with four high-explosive bombs, was finally found on the 13,000-foot Gold Dust Peak. Captain Button had made no attempt to eject.

Investigators reportedly believe that Captain Button had planned the crash and intended to die at a place bearing his own forename and the name of his home state. They think he intended to crash into Craig Peak on New York Mountain, which was immediately behind Gold Dust Peak.

The pilot was buried last week at a military cemetery in New York.

Ian Burrell

briefing

SOCIETY

Majority not offered Parental leave schemes

Employees in 97 per cent of workplaces are missing out on the benefits of parental leave schemes, according to a new survey. Launched on the first "Parenting Day" the report from the Demos think-tank found that only 3 per cent of British organisations offered leave which allowed both men and women to spend time with their families at the birth of a child.

Asked why this was the case, 37 per cent of firms said there was little demand from staff and one in six said that it was either too expensive or that the benefits would not justify the cost. Factors that would make firms consider changing their policies would be parliamentary or EU legislation. Only 26 per cent cited pressure from their employees.

Yet the move would be popular – an early survey showed that 64 per cent of people believe men should be entitled to full parental leave and 80 per cent believe firmly that life is suffering because of long hours at work.

"Demos has registered National Parenting Day on the May Bank Holiday (traditionally workers day) in order to focus government and businesses alike on the issues around enabling employees to balance work and family", said Helen Wilkinson, Demos' project director.

Parental Leave: The Price of Family Values?, £4.95, from Demos. Tel: 0171 353 4479. Glenda Cooper

HEALTH

Back pain linked to stress at work

Work can be a pain in the back if you are unhappy and under stress, a research study has shown. General dissatisfaction with work and a feeling of not being in control may contribute to as many as a quarter of all new cases of lower back pain in Britain, it is claimed.

The findings are based on a survey of 4,500 adults in south Manchester, which also revealed a link between back pain and depression. Up to one in six people who developed low back pain previously showed signs of depression and psychological distress.

Professor Alan Silman, who led the team of the ARC Epidemiology Unit at Manchester University, said researchers were surprised to find that physical factors like lifting and carrying were not as important in developing back pain as psychological and social factors.

The team urged employers to improve both the environment and human relations in the workplace. Their report says lower back pain affects 40 per cent of adults.

LEISURE

Japan is costliest for filmgoers

Tourists with a yen for filmgoing in Japan could find their leisure hours burning a hole in their pockets. The Land of the Rising Sun is easily the most expensive country to buy a cinema ticket, according to *Business Traveller* magazine.

Screen fans in Japan have to fork out an average of £10.75 for a cinema ticket – a far higher cost than the £8.21 paid by cinema-goers in Switzerland, which has the second most expensive tickets.

Of the 12 major countries in the magazine's list, Britain is in 11th place, with tickets costing an average of £4.90.

The cheapest place to see a film is South Africa, where tickets cost just £2.59.

Cinema ticket prices around the world

1. Japan	£10.75
2. Switzerland	£8.21
3. Germany	£5.58
4. France	£5.48
5. Australia	£5.53
6. Brazil	£4.96
7. Britain	£4.90
8. Russia	£4.89
9. Hong Kong	£4.71
10. USA	£4.41
11. Singapore	£3.31
12. South Africa	£2.59

TRANSPORT

Road rage should be a crime

Nearly all motorists think road rage should become a statutory offence, according to a survey published today. A crackdown on aggressive drivers is backed by 93 per cent, while 92 per cent driving is more stressful than it was a decade ago.

The survey, from the RAC and *Auto Express* magazine, found that more than half of all drivers had been sworn at, more than two-thirds had been the target of abusive hand signals, 600,000 motorists had been punched and attacked, and more than a million drivers had been rammed by another car.

RAC campaigns manager Richard Woods said: "This survey confirms motorists' concerns about increased aggression and stress on our roads. We can all help by choosing courtesy instead of confrontation when driving."

DISEASE

Evidence grows for cancer virus

British scientists have found more evidence that a virus could cause certain types of cancer, it is reported today. A Cambridge University team said cases of acute lymphocytic leukaemia (ALL), the biggest cause of leukaemia in children, clustered during the summer months in their study of 4,200 people.

"Whatever is causing this cancer is also seasonal," said Padmanabhan Badrinath, who worked on the study. "We think the potential candidate is a viral infection."

The study, published in the *British Journal of Cancer*, found that ALL was 40 per cent more likely to be diagnosed between May and October than in other months.

ALL affects one in 100,000 children. Victims are lethargic and feverish, pale, irritable and have joint and bone pain. They are anaemic and their immune systems are damaged.

A few cases seem to have genetic factors and there was a six-fold increase in leukaemia, mostly ALL, in Japanese children exposed to radiation from atomic bombs in the Second World War.

Several studies have shown a small increase in ALL among children living near power plants or nuclear reprocessing plants.

Read

In the Eighties designer labels were for the rich, as Yuppies showed how much they were worth. But this decade's designer clothes are for the masses

1 to stress at work

if you are unhappy and under stress. General dissatisfaction with control may contribute to a survey of 4,500 adults in south east London between back pain and people who developed low back pain and pressure and psychological distress. A team at the ARC (University of Exeter) said researchers physical factors like lifting and sitting in developing back pain as well as to improve both the environment and place. Their report says lower back

st for filmgoers

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Cinema ticket prices around the world

1. Japan £10.75
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3. Germany £5.51
4. France £5.51
5. Australia £5.51
6. Brazil £4.96
7. Britain £4.96
8. Russia £4.96
9. Hong Kong £4.71
10. USA £4.61
11. Singapore £3.11
12. South Africa £2.81

Traditional fashion capitals like Paris and Milan have found themselves left behind as big names cash in on the feelgood factor, according to a new survey.

Fuelled by the success of London Fashion Week and London's christening as the capital of cool, there have been 35 designer store openings in London since 1990 and the capital now has more designer floorspace in the pipeline for 1997-98 than Paris, Milan or Los Angeles.

And London is not the only place to benefit - both Armani and Versace will open stores on King Street, Manchester, this year, which has become known as "the Bond Street of the North". They join Hugo Boss and DKNY there. Paul Smith



Style by design: Liam Gallagher and his wife Patsy Kensit shopping at the weekend in Sloane Street, where London's top couture stores are concentrated. Photograph: Emma Boam

High fashion sweeps high street

Glenda Cooper
Consumer Affairs Correspondent



Fashion item: A browser at Asprey steps out on to Bond Street, London - the 'capital of cool'. Photograph: Andrew Buurma

As you walk down Bond Street in your Armani T-shirt, Versace jeans, DKNY sunglasses and swinging your Prada handbag, breathe a sigh of relief. It is time to love your labels again as London becomes the world's most popular place for designer stores.

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and Vivienne Westwood have also moved to Manchester. Red or Dead into Sheffield and Gianni Versace and Christian Lacroix into Glasgow.

More than half the openings in London and New York by the top nine names - like Armani, Versace, Tommy Hilfiger, Don Karan and Gucci - have happened since 1995, according to the investment research company Hillier Parker. In London this has crystallised into three.

Worldwide sales of premium branded clothing have risen to £20bn last year compared to £16bn in 1992 - a rise of 8.7 per cent per annum. Projected sales put next year's sales as high as £24bn.

This "phenomenal growth"

can be attributed to several factors. The UK and the US emerged early from economic recessions compared to countries like France and Germany, while the rich, who buy designer clothes, have been getting richer. In both the UK and the US, people in the top 20 per cent income group have enjoyed large growth in their net disposable incomes - up to 60 per cent between 1979 and 1994 - which has filtered through to increased spending on clothes and footwear.

But while the 1980s created designer labels almost exclusively for the rich, this decade's designer clothes are for the masses. Only 6 per cent of the population could afford ready-to-wear, but more than 60 per cent can afford the so-called diffusion lines. So far, 35 per cent of the stores are diffusion line outlets, and for those in the pipeline the percentage is growing.

There are few people who can afford £700 a garment, let's face it. But take something like CK Jeans," said Alexander Lawrie, retail analyst and author of the report. "At £45 they may be cheaper than a pair of Levi's

and they have become a best seller. Kids like them because they are different - they are bored of wearing Levi's and Wrangler and the kids also perceive that they are getting catwalk quality. It's a triumph of image over substance."

It's buying into the catwalk lifestyle. And designers are becoming famous in the way football stars did. It's not just about their collections. There's a big obsession with the private life of say Calvin Klein, Armani, Ralph Lauren was profiled in *Fortune* magazine. It's become this whole big thing.

As the designers move in, the competition gets fiercer and fiercer. Ralph Lauren who is to open a new store in Bond Street

in 1998 is paying an annual lease of £2.5m - a new London record - whilst spending £10m on refurbishing the site. Prada, due to open this year on Old Bond Street, is believed to have paid £650,000 to Jill Sander to obtain the lease of this premium site. Moschino and Saks Fifth Avenue are looking for sites in the area. Rents in Old Bond Street are rising by more than a third every year. To finance such expansion three of the top nine designers have floated on the stock market and others look likely to relinquish their privately owned status.

"They are seeking further opportunities. There is a sea change away from retailer labels which is why the department store sector is growing so well, they are on the crest of the wave."

"We haven't reached the limits yet," said Peter York, style guru. "It is simple way of telegraphing where you are and what you want which is pretty expensive ... If people feel more happy, more assured because they are prepared to pay £20 to have a name on their jeans it's a fair price - no a relatively modest price - for therapy."

"Fashion Designer Store Expansion in Central London and New York available from Hillier Parker, 0171 629 7666

Song contest win will cost BBC dear

Ian Burrell

As Katrina and the Waves performed their celebratory rendition of Eurovision winner "Love Shine A Light" in Dublin on Saturday night, BBC executives were reeling from the £3m hole which the song's success could blow in their budget.

For in Eurovision tradition, the winning country is obliged to stage the following year's contest.

After Bucks Fizz's victory with "Making Your Mind Up" 16 years ago, Ian Leeming presided over the last British-staged Eurovision, a comparatively tame affair in the genteel surroundings of Harrogate.

Since then the stakes have been raised, with new technology and competition from other entertainment sources transforming the event into an extravagant occasion.

Ireland's domination of the contest - with four victories in the past six years - has nearly bankrupted its national television station RTÉ.

But BBC bosses, like the Eurovision contestants, kept smiling yesterday, with Michael Leggo, the head of BBC entertainment, saying "I can't think of a nicer problem to have."

Apparently confusing the significance of the occasion with Thursday's election, he added: "We are delighted to bring the contest back after an absence of 18 years [sic]."

Manchester has already thrown its hat into the ring as a potential venue, but the British public is likely to be less than overwhelmed by the prospect of staging the contest.

Eurovision expert Professor Ian Gordon of Reading University, said: "The British seem to feel contempt for the type of song which tends to win. There is a very strong Euro-sceptic element to British pop tastes."

Invited for the first time to take part in a televote on this year's event, British viewers backed the Irish contestant. But Norway was in mourning again after scoring "nil points" for a record fourth time and coming last for an uninvited sixth year.

West's diseases spread as the world goes grey

Jeremy Laurance
Health Editor



Long live youth: Affluent women like Goldie Hawn, Jane Fonda and Lauren Bacall are living healthier lifestyles. The aim is to "die young as late as possible", according to the WHO

The greying of the world is revealed in a report today, which shows that global life expectancy has risen faster in the last half century than in the previous 2,000 years.

Growing prosperity and improving living conditions are contributing to an extraordinary extension of longevity. Life expectancy at birth across the world has risen from 48 in 1955 to 65 today, according to the World Health Organisation.

Over the next two decades, the global population of over-65s is set to rise by 82 per cent.

However, as the Western

way of life is exported round the world, the Western way of death is following closely in its wake.

In its 1997 report on the state of the world's health, the WHO

warns that the ageing population is experiencing a rapid

rise in cancer, heart disease and other chronic conditions, which threatens to reduce the benefit

of those extra years of life.

The number of over-65s is ex-

pected to grow from 380 million

today to 690 by 2020.

Over the same period, cancers

will rise from 10 million to 15

million cases annually, cases of

diabetes will more than double

and dementia will become a

leading cause of disability.

Launching the report at a

press conference in London,

Dr Paul Kleihues, director of

the International Agency for Re-

search on Cancer in Lyons,

France, said the increase in

chronic diseases in old age was

a testament to the success of

efforts to combat infectious dis-

eases, which predominantly kill

the young. "The increase in life

expectancy is one of our great

est achievements, but longevity without health is an empty prize. Health expectancy is more important than life expectancy. The aim should be to die young as late as possible.

So-called "diseases of affluence" kill more people in the developing world but cause a higher proportion of deaths in the developed world. Heart disease, the chief affliction of the West, now accounts for more than a quarter of deaths in the developing world. In Central America and the Middle East, heart disease, diabetes and renal disease dominate the medical wards.

Lung cancer rates in European women, who took up smoking later than men, are set

to rise by a third by 2005. Dr Kleihues said the priority

should be to prevent young people taking up the habit. "All attempts to legislate to restrict smoking by young people in Europe have been blocked by three countries - Germany, the Netherlands and the UK. We hope very much with a new UK government this will change."

Dr Hilary King, WHO medical officer in the division of non-communicable diseases, said the rapid increase of chronic diseases in developing countries could be due to genetic factors:

"Non-Caucasians may have a greater underlying susceptibility to these diseases. Individuals who live in harsher parts of the world, where food supplies are erratic, develop the capacity to store energy so that they can survive. But when a Western diet is available that same capacity can become a disadvantage, precipitating diabetes and heart disease."

A study in the *Lancet* says more people died worldwide from suicide than from HIV infection in 1990, and more than half the female suicides in the world occurred in China.

How ageing will change the world

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— 1995 total population: 5,715,426,000
— 2025 total population: 8,294,341,000

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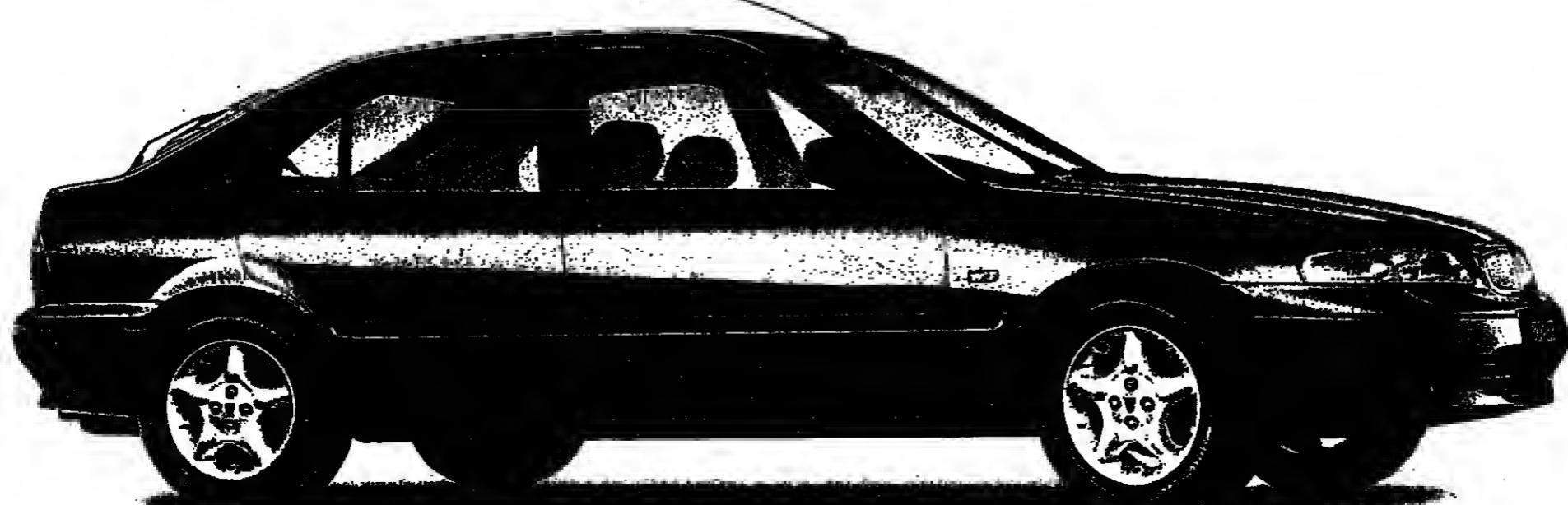
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IND10

Blair's
hymn to
Galaxy
man

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blair's britain

Mother and son vow to live up to rebel MP's principles

Kim Sengupta

It is a mother and child reunion which writes a new chapter in the history of the Labour Party. Ann and John Cryer are the first mother and son to have won seats together party in Parliament. Their presence is a potent symbol of the Labour election landslide and also a poignant reminder of the tragic early death of one of the great rebel MPs of the past.

Bob Cryer died at the wheel of his car when it crashed through a barrier on the M1 in April 1994. His wife, who was in the passenger seat, suffered facial injuries. They had been on their way to the Commons for a birthday party for their son.

Mr Cryer had been a thorn in the side of Labour establishment, and had resigned his government seat on a point of principle. He had also been one of the most trenchant and com-

bative critics of the Tories. But there was real grief at the death from all sides.

The loss shattered the family. John, a journalist, vowed that one day he would follow in his father's footsteps and carry on his work in Parliament. He had learnt his politics at his father's knee, and joined the Labour Party at 15.

Two weeks after Mr Cryer was killed, his widow was approached by the local party to ask whether she would consider replacing him as the MP for Bradford South. But she was too desolate to contemplate a political career and said she was not ready. "I was in a state of shock at the time. I felt terrible grief. For the first six months I was seriously in depression and for the next six I was very, very down," she recalled.

"We had been married for 31 years, and we were very close. I still remember the accident, I

shall never forget it. At the time I started to talk to Bob and I knew straight away he was dead, it is something I still go through most days. We were going down for John's birthday, it is a shame for him his birthday has become associated with Bob's death."

A year later, there was another approach from the neighbouring constituency of Keighley, her husband's first seat, which he had lost to the Tories after boundary changes.

Mrs Cryer, 56, said: "I talked it through with John, and my daughter Jane, and decided to give it a go. I had first met Bob at a Labour Party conference in Blackpool in 1961, and we have always been a political family.

"Bob and I always thought he would never have lost Keighley in the first place if the very odd changes had not been brought in. They could not beat him fairly, so they changed the rules.

"There is an added satisfac-

tion to this win, I have won back Keighley from Gary Waller, who beat Bob in 1983. My politics are similar to Bob's I shall try to make sure the Labour government do not abandon the basic beliefs of the Labour Party."

John Cryer, 33, wrested Horwich from Robin Squire, the Under-Secretary for Education and Employment, overturning a 9,000 majority.

Mr Cryer said: "We fought very hard to win this, but at the end it was still a very pleasant surprise. I still cannot believe the sheer size of the party majority. My father was a 'boro rebel. He was made Under-Secretary for Industry, but he hated being in government ...

"He has been described as a

man of principle who always fought for the underdog. He defended the rights of working people, the underprivileged and minorities. I shall do my best to carry on that task."



Keeping it in the family: Ann and John Cryer, who are among Labour's new intake of MPs. Photograph: Justin Sibley/Guzelian

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*Offer is for 3 months and starts from the first day of the month following connection



PR heads left's list of urgent reforms

Fran Abrams

Political Correspondent

Last night Cabinet sources were suggesting the issue of PR would not be tackled until the referendums on devolution for Scotland and Wales had been held.

However, the Labour Campaign for Electoral Reform says it has already signed up 100 MPs and will fight vigorously for firm commitments. Mr Blair has said he is "not persuaded" of the case for electoral reform and John Prescott has expressed similar views. But Clare Short, Robin Cook and Mo Mowlam have said they favour it.

The conference, organised by the Fabians and the Democratic Left with the Institute for Public Policy research, is likely to reject what many see as the old left's unrealistic demands. Instead, it will call for a firm timetable on electoral and constitutional reform from the Labour government.

Some "old" left-wingers were making their views known yesterday for the first time since the election was called.

Ken Livingstone, MP for Brent East, said in a television interview that the Chancellor Gordon Brown should impose substantial tax increases on high earners in spite of a pledge not to raise income tax.

"I don't believe for a minute that a Labour government is going to start hitting people earning under £50,000 a year, and the vast majority of the public agree with that," he said.

Meanwhile, those on what likes to be called the "new left" were tailoring their demands to what they thought could be achieved. They intend to win a firm commitment on proportional representation, first for European elections and then, through a referendum, for Westminster elections.

Letters, page 14

Schools guru to enforce pledges

Lucy Ward

Education Correspondent

The school improvement guru who headed Labour's literacy task force was yesterday appointed special adviser to the Government on standards and effectiveness in schools.

Michael Barber, the London University academic who has advised the Labour leadership on education for two years, as well as heading research projects for the Conservative government, will oversee implementation of Labour's manifesto pledges aimed at raising educational standards.

Among his responsibilities will be programmes on school target-setting, failing schools, home school contracts and homework requirements.

Professor Barber, 41, former Dean of New Initiatives at London University's Institute of Education, is a New Labour favourite and "ideal man". Last year he suggested the post of Education and Employment Secretary should be elevated to

a similar rank to the Foreign Secretary. His proposals for an education revolution based on guaranteeing standards and encouraging lifetime learning, set out last year in his book *The Learning Game*, were praised as "provocative and timely" by Tony Blair.

Professor Barber will begin preparatory work tomorrow on elements of the Government's Education White Paper, expected to be out by June.

The paper would include policies requiring legislation, such as plans to abolish grant maintained status, but would also "set out the Government's broader aims and ambitions on education," he said.

As part of Labour's School Improvement Strategy, local Education Authorities will be required to submit education development plans to the Department for Education and Employment. "There has never been a Labour government with such a mandate or with such a clear programme on education," he said.

Leader's
Blair o
World S

Ken



Caretaker Major back in front line

Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

John Major could take personal charge of a raft of key policy areas formerly the responsibility of former cabinet ministers who lost their seats in the election. Conservative sources said last night.

Mr Major might decide to speak for his party on areas such as foreign affairs and defence until he stands down as leader. In another key area, Scotland,

Rebuilding the Conservative Party: A provisional timetable.

Tuesday 6 May: John Major meets chief whip, Alastair Goodlad, and leader in the Lords, Lord Cranborne, on interim Shadow Cabinet.

Wednesday 7 May: Friday 8 May: New MPs sworn in.

Wednesday 14 May: Queen's Speech. Tory MPs could meet the same day to start elections for backbench 1922 Committee.

Wednesday 21 May: New chairman and executive of the 1922 Committee elected.

Wednesday 28 May: Tory leadership election begins.

Wednesday 4 June: First leadership ballot.

Wednesday 11 June: Second leadership ballot. New leader elected.

Thursday 12 June: New leader begins forming Shadow Cabinet.

all four former Scottish Office ministers have lost their seats.

The new Tory leader, who will be elected next month, will choose his or her own Shadow Cabinet. Mr Major has to decide how to tackle parliamentary business in the meantime.

With 9 days to go before Labour announces its legislative programme, including devolution for Scotland and Wales, Mr Major must act quickly to fill seven gaps in his team. They are

left by the former Secretary of State for Defence, Michael Portillo, the Secretary of State for Scotland, Michael Forsyth, the Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, the Secretary of State for Transport, Roger Freeman, the President of the Board of Trade, Ian Lang, the Leader of the House, Tony Newton, and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, William Waldegrave.

Mr Major will see his chief whip, Alastair Goodlad, and the shadow leader of the Lords, Viscount Cranborne, tomorrow to discuss the problem. He has three options - to allow people who have been junior ministers to act up as leading spokespeople, to give the job to spokespeople from the House of Lords, or to do the job himself for the time being.

"Areas like defence, foreign affairs, Northern Ireland are obviously things that would clearly come under the Prime Minister's remit," a Conservative spokesman said. He added that spokesmen in the House of Lords could take over, but in that case someone would still have to be found to put the Opposition case on the Queen's Speech and in other debates in the House of Commons.

A more permanent Shadow Cabinet will be chosen by the Conservatives' new leader once he or she has been elected. But before an election can be held, a new chairman and executive of the Conservative backbench 1922 Committee must be found.

Its former chairman, Sir Marcus Fox, lost his Shipley seat to Labour and one of its two vice-chairmen, Dame Jill Knight, stood down at the election.

The other vice-chairman, Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith, will stand for the post: John MacGregor, Tom King and Archie Hamilton could also take part.

Appointments to the new Government so far:

The Cabinet

Prime Minister - Tony Blair, 43, (* £100,000)
Deputy Prime Minister, Secretary of State for Environment, Transport and Regions - John Prescott, 58, £60,000
Chancellor of the Exchequer - Gordon Brown, 47, £60,000
Foreign Secretary - Robin Cook, 51, £60,000
Lord Chancellor - The Lord Irvine of Lairg, 56, £135,406
Home Secretary - Jack Straw, 50, £60,000
Secretary of State for Education and Employment - David Blunkett, 49, £60,000
President of the Board of Trade - Margaret Beckett, 54, £60,000
Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food - Dr Jack Cunningham, 57, £60,000

Secretary of State for Scotland - Donald Dewar, 59, £60,000
Secretary of State for Defence - George Robertson, 51, £60,000
Secretary of State for Health - Frank Dobson, 57, £60,000
President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons - Ann Taylor, 49, £60,000
Secretary of State for National Heritage - Chris Smith, 45, £60,000
Secretary of State for Social Security - Harriet Harman, 46, £60,000
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland - Marjorie Mowlam, 47, £60,000
Secretary of State for Wales - Ron Davies, 50, £60,000
Secretary of State for International Development - Clare Short, 51, £60,000
Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Lords - The Lord Richard, 64, £77,963
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster - David Clark, 57, £60,000

Minister of Transport - Gavin Strang, 53, £60,000
Chief Secretary to the Treasury - Alastair Darling, 43, £60,000
Ministers not in the Cabinet
Chief Whip** - Nick Brown, 46, £36,613
Minister without Portfolio, Peter Mandelson, 43, £31,125
Minister for Europe, Doug Henderon, 47, £31,125
Paymaster General, Geoffrey Robinson, 48, £31,125
Treasury Minister of State, Helen Liddell, 46, £31,125
Employment Minister of State - Andrew Smith, 46, £31,125
Social Security Minister of State - Frank Field, 54, £31,125

*Mr Blair has indicated that he will not take full salary
**Will attend Cabinet
All Cabinet ministers and ministers of state also receive MP's salary of £43,860. Lords are not paid an extra salary.

Taking a walk in the political wilderness

Kim Sengupta

The lost leaders of the Tories have spent the weekend contemplating the cold reality of life without political power.

Some Cabinet members who lost their seats had aspirations of

leading their party and the country - hopes which would have to be either abandoned or put on hold. They also have to watch from the sidelines while their rivals in the Commons fight it out to be John Major's successor.

The flip side of this disappo-

intment, they say, is that they can now relax away from the pressure of public life and travel, spend more time with their family, and generally "have a life".

Malcolm Rifkind, the former Foreign Secretary who lost his Edinburgh Pentland seat, intends to take his wife Edith on a belated 25th anniversary trip to Florence. "This is something we had planned for a while," he said. "We ... wanted to go there for our anniversary. But something happened in Bosnia and we had to cancel."

"I am of course disappointed by the election result. But ... there is a tremendous feeling of being more relaxed, I have been in ministerial positions without a break since 1979, and there have been plenty of long hard days."

Mr Rifkind, an advocate of the Scottish Bar, added: "I suppose I will be looking around for business opportunities. I would not be going back to the Bar. It is 20 years since I practised law, and I would not want to have me as my lawyer."

"Obviously I remain totally committed to the future of the Conservative party, but

I do not have a direct involvement in the elections."

Norman Lamont, who thought he had found a safe haven in Harrogate after his Kingston-upon-Thames seat disappeared in the boundary changes, but who still lost, has no illusions about his access to power outside Parliament.

"A man not in the Commons is a dead man," he said. "You see a lot of dead men, but they really cannot influence much when it comes to choosing the next party leader."

"I already have a number of business interests, and I shall be concentrating on those. I am keeping an open mind on whether I get back to politics or not." He added: "Despite their majority I think the Labour Government may well go after one term."

Unlike Mr Rifkind, Mr Lamont believes Europe remains a central issue, and a future leader ignores it at his peril.

Michael Portillo, the most prominent leadership front-runner to get the electoral chop, has said he was considering a future outside politics, at least for a while, either in broadcasting or in business. He said he

had almost forgotten how to do everyday things like relax and read a book, or simply arrange to have lunch. His wife, Carolyn Eddie, is a high-earning City headhunter.

He said: "I really feel I am not an MP. I've left the field ... I might be back one day, but I don't know."

But John Whittingdale, a Tory MP and one of Mr Portillo's closest allies, said: "He is a senior figure in the party and he can have a lot of influence even now. A time will come, perhaps through a by-election, for him to get back in the Commons."

William Waldegrave, the former Chief Secretary to the Treasury, is a fellow of All Souls, Oxford, and could opt for an academic career. Last year he was talked of as a future Master of Eton College. He could also be a candidate for any vacant masterships of the Oxford colleges.

Major John Thomas, the agent for Jonathan Aitken, said the former Thanet South MP planned a lengthy summer holiday with his family before deciding his future. He said that Mr Aitken, a former journalist, may take up writing full time.

Voting in the council elections

This is the full list of results in last Thursday's council elections.

ENGLAND

BEDFORDSHIRE: C, 25; Lab, 14;

LD, 10; C, gain from NOC

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE: C, 38; LD, 10;

Lab, 5; Ind, 1; C, No change

CAMBRIDGESHIRE: C, 40; Lab, 19;

LD, 17; Lab, 1; C, gain from NOC

CHESHIRE: Lab, 37; C, 22; LD, 12;

Lab, gain from NOC

CORNWALL: LD, 39; Ind, 21; Lab, 8;

C, 7; Lab, 1; Others, 3; LD, loss to NOC

CUMBRIA: Lab, 44; C, 22; LD, 12; Ind,

4; Lab, gain from NOC

DERBYSHIRE: C, 45; C, 12; LD, 6;

Ind, 1; Lab, No change

DEVON: LD, 37; C, 21; Lab, 20; Ind,

4; Lab, 3; NOC, No change

EAST SUSSEX: C, 21; LD, 16; Lab, 7; LD, loss to NOC

WEST SUSSEX: C, 37; LD, 24; Lab, 9; Ind, 1; C, gain

from NOC

WARRINGTON: Lab, 31; C, 22; LD, 8; R, 1; NOC

WORCESTERSHIRE: C, 25; Lab, 22; LD, 8; Ind, 1; Others, 1; NOC

WYRE: C, 35; LD, 21; LD, 12; Ind, 6; NOC No

change

WYTHROP: C, 38; Lab, 30; LD, 9; NOC, No change

YORKSHIRE: C, 50; Lab, 30; LD, 19; C, gain

from NOC

UNITED KINGDOM

BLACKBURN: Lab, 46; C, 12; LD, 4; Lab, control new

council

BLACKPOOL: Lab, 34; C, 7; LD, 3; Lab, control new

council

BRACKNELL FOREST: C, 33; Lab, 17; LD, 1; Ind, 1; NOC, No change

BRIGHTON & HOVE: C, 34; Lab, 10; LD, 4; Ind, 1; NOC, No change

BRIXTON: C, 35; Lab, 11; LD, 1; Ind, 1; NOC, No change

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BRIXTON: C, 35; Lab, 11; LD, 1; Ind, 1; NOC, No change

BRIXTON: C, 35; Lab, 11; LD,

Russians pack up their roubles for a package of fun

We were looking for a change, a burst of technicolour after the monotonous hues of Moscow. And southern Turkey seemed right. The brochures said the sun shines and the air is clear and warm. A pollen-scented breeze drifts down from the Taurus mountains and through the banana groves along the edge of an azure Mediterranean. Amazingly, all this guff turned out to be true.

We were in Alanya, on the southern coast. Like the cocktails on sale in the outdoor bars along Ataturk Street, the main boulevard, it is a potent cultural

mixture – an Islamic community (prayers ring out from the mosques as the sun sets) crossbred with a wild eastern town, and yet unapologetically Western, with fish 'n' chips 'n' beer.

An identity crisis was on view on the newsstands: copies of postcards showing thonged female backsides sat next to German-language copies of the Koran. This is where the men and women who run Western Europe's giant industrial engine come to relax. And so, in increasing numbers, do Russians.

Being a snob at heart, I will admit to some apprehension

when my wife signed us up for a week-long Russian package, albeit for a remarkably low price. I saw dingy rooms, nights interrupted by vodka-fuelled singing, food poisoning, compulsory tours of shopping centres. My prejudices hardened just after we had arrived. No sooner had our Ilyushin-80 taxied heavily to a halt than one of our party, a young woman, started smiling. She was so drunk that she could barely walk off the aircraft.

The outlook darkened further once we had found our rep, standing amid a crowd of others, flourishing their signs. "This

MOSCOW DAYS

is a completely capitalist society," she explained in Russian, as we drove down the coast in a minibus, awkwardly clutching bunches of carnations, a gift from our hosts. "You have to pay for everything. They'll be charging for the air next." A Georgian, brought up in Soviet-controlled Tbilisi, she had been shocked to discover that nowhere in this cultural capitalist desert could she buy a tape of Mozart's *Requiem*.

determined to get it. Yes, they quite liked the hotel's vast pool, its terraces overlooking a private beach, its tennis court and casino. But they weren't afraid of speaking out if something wasn't up to scratch.

Sasha, a 25-year-old manager from one of Moscow's handful of McDonald's outlets, was with his wife, also a McDonald's employee. On our first day, he appeared with a hand-written list detailing his complaints and queries, which he presented to the rep. Though large, his room had no sea view; there were, he said, only three hot courses at

the evening buffet, whereas the last time he visited Turkey his hotel had many more. And so on. "My wife and I have decided to spend our money now," he explained. "We could stay at home and do nothing except sleep. But who in Russia knows what tomorrow holds?"

I usually don't much like quibblers, the kind of people who insist on dividing restaurant bills precisely. But Sasha made his case pleasantly. He is not rich. It was evidently not easy to afford a holiday, and he knew he would soon be returning to a penury-wise existence in Moscow.

Historically, Russia has always had truistic building a middle class. They are the foundation stone for the establishment of a sound market economy, law and order, and liberalism in a way in which the super-rich, the criminal classes, and the overwhelming multitude of impoverished Russians can never be.

By politely demanding value for his rouble, Sasha and his ilk are what Russia needs right now – even if the Turks think they're fops.

Phil Reeves

Drugs top Clinton talks in Mexico

Phil Davison
Latin America Correspondent
Mary Dejevska
Washington

Bill Clinton has been around the globe as President but he has never crossed his southern border. Today he puts that right with an official visit to Mexico, dubbed the United States' "distant neighbour". It will be his first official visit to a Latin American country.

The flow of narcotics from Mexico to the US, as well as the flow of Mexicans themselves, will top the agenda in talks with President Ernesto Zedillo. But the three-day visit will be largely symbolic, the start of a long-delayed effort by Mr Clinton to tighten trade and other ties with the nations to the south.

Critics say he is somewhat late. Since he led a so-called

Washington — The most likely explanation for the crash of TWA flight 800 off Long Island last summer is still "catastrophic mechanical failure", according to the head of the FBI, Louis Freeh, writes Mary Dejevska.

In a television interview yesterday he denied that the FBI had been party to a "giant cover-up" and dismissed suggestions that the jet might have been brought down by a missile.

Mr Freeh was nonetheless careful not to rule out any possibility too categorically. He said he hoped the official inquiry would present its findings by late summer, more than a year after the crash which killed 230 people.

Summit of the Americas in Miami in December 1994, pledging a pan-American free trade zone within a decade, he has largely neglected Latin American nations and seen European muscle in.

The European Union did more trade with the South American common market – known as Mercosur – than did the US last year for the first time.

"They [the Americans] only turn to look at our countries when there are wars, conflicts or natural disasters," Nicaraguan President Arnoldo Alemán said recently.

Mr Clinton will be welcomed politely, but not particularly warmly in Mexico, where people still dream of going north to prosperity but where stories of the two countries' 19th century war are still handed down from generation to generation.

"I don't see it as a visit of rec-

onciliation," Mr Clinton told reporters in Washington. "I see it as building an ongoing partnership between two great nations that share a huge border and a common future, have some common problems, and inevitably some disagreements."

The major common problem is their 2,000-mile border, seen by poor Mexicans as a stepping stone to prosperity, from the Third World to the First. In August new US laws come into force that will, if not amended, mean that new arrivals who do not qualify for citizenship or do not want US citizenship will not be entitled to federal welfare benefits. These provisions are accompanied by a tougher approach to illegal immigration.

The legislation is not popular with some US states, which fear they could end up funding welfare programmes for legal immigrants. It worries the Mexican authorities, however, who fear that emigration – which provides an important safety valve for internal discontent and a reliable source of US dollars – could become even harder at present.

Mr Zedillo will tell Mr Clinton the key is in helping narrow the economic gap, otherwise Mexicans will always head north.

Mr Clinton is expected to congratulate Mr Zedillo on his efforts to curb the flow of marijuana, cocaine and heroin across the border although the Mexican President's critics say many government officials at federal, state and local level are still in the pay of drug lords.

Last week Mexico announced it was scrapping a corruption-riddled anti-narcotics agency and giving its duties to the attorney-general's office. The head of the agency, an army general, was arrested in February for protecting the country's leading drug baron.

Mr Clinton and Mr Zedillo are expected to sign a vaguely-worded agreement on the security of US drug enforcement agents. The latter seek the formal right to carry weapons on Mexican soil for their own protection against violent drug trafficking gangs. Mexico has long opposed the idea, citing its sovereignty, but in effect most US agents carry weapons anyway.

In case it all seems one-way, Mexico will protest to the US over the influx of weapons. Mexico's ambassador to Washington, Jesus Silva Herzog, said Mexican drug gangs get most of their guns from the US because of lax gun laws and poor border checks.

Stephen Vines
Hong Kong

Hong Kong's well-known liberal legislator, Christine Loh, yesterday presided over the formation of a new party, the Citizens' Party.

Miss Loh spoke of the party's "competing on better policies".

"Basically, we're going to bang on quality," she said. And, in the best traditions of marketing managers everywhere, she insisted that "the market is not saturated for politics" in Hong Kong".

Legal political parties are a relatively new phenomenon in Hong Kong. Less than a dozen have been formed in the past half decade, few quite as modestly as the Citizens' Party, with just 14 members and one legislator. Miss Loh, who will be kicked out of office along with her colleagues when China takes over on 1 July.

Christine Loh is among the more outstanding of Hong Kong's new politicians. As matters stand, they have no prospect of gaining political

power because the government will remain under the firm control of the executive. Moreover, those in the liberal camp may well face considerable problems from the incoming regime which is deeply suspicious of opposition politics and appears not

to understand the concept of an opposition.

However, Miss Loh remains an optimist. She believes that there is everything to play for in the battle of ideas.

As a legislator, she has established a reputation as a battler for

human rights and environmental causes. A lawyer by training, headed for a highly-lucrative career in the private sector, Miss Loh has opted instead for what may become the political wilderness of opposition, facing local media hostility and little

prospect of influencing the government.

The parties which matter these days are those which support Peking, or are quickly edging in that direction. Their problem is a consistent failure to gain popular support. China's

rival legislature is now working out plans to change the electoral system. Critics, including Chris Patten, the Governor, say the aim is to rig the polls to help these parties win.

The pro-Peking parties are busy reassessing their role now they are poised to become the closest thing Hoog Kooi has to government parties. Two of the less successful ones are planning a merger, while the largest of the pro-Peking parties is rewriting its platform. It is wrestling with the problem of reconciling its support for trade unions with the views of a government dominated by business leaders.

The democratic camp appears to be further divided by the creation of the Citizens' Party, but Martin Lee, leader of the Democratic Party, Hong Kong's largest, is sanguine.

Appearing at yesterday's launch celebrations for the Citizens' Party, he said: "The democratic camp has always been larger than the Democratic Party." He added: "I see a lot of common ground and we certainly will co-operate."

Liberal champion launches HK party

William Hartston

It is 6ft 8ins tall, weighs 1.4 tons and calculates 200 million chess moves every second, but Deep Blue, the IBM computer still appears, on the evidence of Saturday's opening game of their match in New York, to be 0-0 match by a final score of 4-2.

Since then, the technicians at IBM have been putting in considerable efforts to strengthen the play of their machine. Hardware

improvements have doubled its processing speed.

Saturday's game, however, showed that computers still have a good deal to learn. Kasparov, playing white and pictured above on television monitors before a large audience, began cautiously, refusing to make the same mistake as in the opening game last year when he was

punished for taking too many risks.

This time, it was the machine that was tempted into over-aggression. At the 13th move it advanced a pawn to force Kasparov's knight to retreat, but weakened its own position in the process.

Beating off the threat, Kasparov gradually took control of the game

and forced the machine to resign

at move 45. By creating wild complications from a dull looking position Deep Blue showed it will be a very dangerous opponent in the five remaining games, but its poor judgement on occasions has made Kasparov a clear favourite to pocket the \$70,000 (£325,000) winner's purse.

Photograph: AP



■ Due to production problems this cartoon appeared in some editions of last Friday's paper

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international

Zaire's revolution nears climax as

Rebels push towards capital as élite units fade away

Ed O'Loughlin
Kinshasa

As Zairean peace talks inched forward yesterday, rebel soldiers east of the capital were pushing ahead to ensure there could be only one outcome to the seven-month-old civil war.

Reports from diplomatic and military sources in Kinshasa said that last Friday soldiers of Laurent Kabila's Alliance of Democratic Forces passed through the town of Kenge, 150 miles to the east of the capital, and were advancing rapidly in a column of trucks. Yesterday Mr Kabila claimed that his troops would be within 60 miles of Kinshasa when night fell.

There are believed to be few, if any, organised government forces between the rebels and the capital. A series of bridges, reported to have been blown up

his supporters in the Zairean establishment a chance to deny absolute power to Mr Kabila.

Sources connected to the

Zairean government said the

president would offer to leave

Zaire for "health reasons",

handing power over - in the

constitutionally prescribed

manner - to the speaker of the

parliamentary assembly.

At present the position is empty, but for favour it for the job is Monsignor Laurent Monsengwo, a well-respected Roman Catholic archbishop who helped launch Zaire's ill-starred

democratisation process in

1991. The new speaker would

be charged with appointing an

interim president, probably a

currently serving minister who

could co-operate with the

rebels in organising elections.

Only the first part of this offer

was likely to have much appeal

for the increasingly hard-line Mr

Kabila who, until a ceasefire is

in place, has the opportunity to

seize power. The rebel advance

has accelerated in recent days,

and reports from the city of Kik-

wit, captured early last week, say

the airport is being used for an

intensive airdrop of supplies.

One source close to Zaire's

military leadership says that a

force of 1,500 élite presidential

guards was ordered towards

Kenge on Friday to launch a

final counter-attack. Paid a spe-

cial bonus in advance, many sol-

diers failed to turn up. Only

around 300 are believed to

have departed; their fate is un-

known.

The remaining presidential

guards and Zairean soldiers in

Kinsasa seem to be making no

effort to prepare defence for the

capital, nor for its vital airport.

If there is a battle for Kinshasa,

it seems likely to be short.

In Kinshasa itself the streets

were unusually quiet yesterday.

Tensions have been raised

not only by the political situa-

tion but by a closely linked mon-

etary crisis. Last Thursday the

bankrupt government of prime

minister General Lukula Bo-

longo announced that it was go-

ing to make a second attempt

British troops on standby

Christopher Bellamy
Defence Correspondent

British officials have contingency plans to evacuate up to 1,000 European and Commonwealth citizens from Kinshasa if the situation deteriorates. They stressed they had no reason to believe it would but were taking no chances. "Kinshasa is currently calm but it could turn nasty within hours," said one.

Operation "Determinant" has continued with 200 more British troops from the Princess of Wales' Royal Regiment, the spearhead battalion, who have now arrived on Ascension Island, en route to join another 100 British troops in Libreville, the capital of Gabon.

They can, if necessary, reinforce the 40 Royal Marines already in position on the banks of the Zaire river in case they have to organise an evacuation. Another 60 British personnel are in Brazzaville, Congo, as the forward headquarters for the operation which is commanded by Brigadier Julian Thomson of the Royal Marines. The other main nations involved in pulling foreign citizens out are France, the US and Belgium.

France has 350 troops in Brazzaville and 350 in Libreville, al-

though only the former are earmarked to help evacuate foreign nationals.

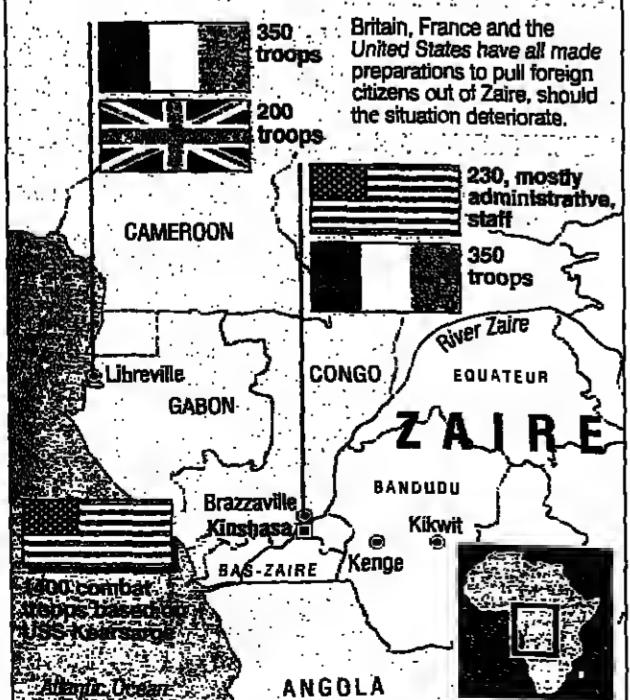
The US has 230 (mostly administrative staff) in Brazzaville; the combat troops, 1,400 of them, are embarked on the USS *Kearsarge* which took over from the USS *Nassau* on Tuesday. The Belgians have 150 troops in Libreville and another 400 at Pointe Noire, Congo.

The British Royal Marines can lift 100 people at a time in two hovercraft, known as LCAC(L)s (Landing Craft Air Cushion (Light)) and four "rigid raider" assault boats.

The plans, which have been developed with the British Ambassador in Kinshasa, involve collecting the people for whom the British have taken responsibility - up to 250 British, 250 Commonwealth and 500 other EU citizens - from various assembly points and transporting them north, across the Zaire river, and the border, to Brazzaville.

The main assembly point is the British Embassy enclosure on the banks of the Zaire river, where a jetty has been repaired to enable people to be embarked. A second assembly point is in the Gulf Oil compound, and there are others ten to twelve miles south of Kinshasa.

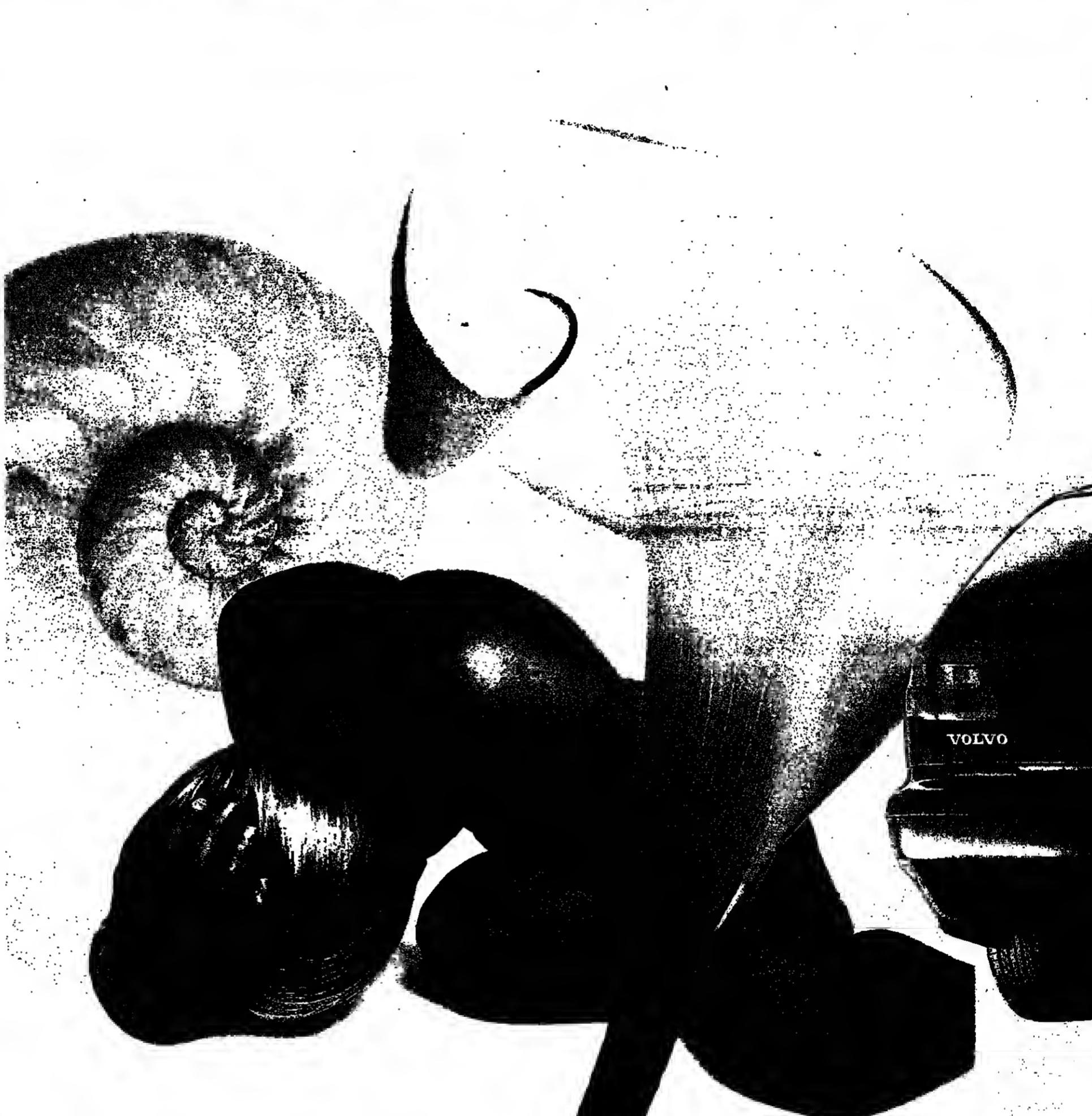
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Going home: Hutu refugees preparing to board a UN transport aircraft at Kisangani, Zaire, which is headed for Rwanda. Photograph: John Moore/AP



X as

new order sweeps its way to power

Legacy of corrupt and ruthless dictator who built Versailles in the jungle



Past and present: Mobutu rousing the masses in 1977, right, and rebel leader Laurent Kabila



Photographs: AP

Kinshasa (Reuters) — President Mobutu Sese Seko, one of Africa's longest-serving strongmen, now trying to negotiate a dignified exit from power, has ruled Zaire for more than three decades with a blend of military ruthlessness and political acumen.

A master of the power game, he exploited the West's strategic fears during the Cold War and gave his sprawling and chaotic country at the heart of Africa a badly-needed focus in the turbulent aftermath of independence from Belgium in 1960.

A reluctant convert to democracy, he started pushing, in public at least, for much-delayed multi-party presidential elections — confident that his support in rural areas would enable him to legitimise his rule through the ballot box.

"The democratic process must inevitably be crowned a free and fair election," he said in a 1996 New Year address.

"I am perhaps the only dictator in the world who is calling for such elections," he once told a television interviewer.

But prostate cancer and a Tutsi-dominated revolt intervened, weakening his grip on the mineral-rich nation of 40 million people.

As Laurent Kabila's rebels have advanced from the east, capturing towns and territory, Mr Mobutu's popularity faded.

Ordinary Zaireans, weary of the ravages of his notoriously ill-disciplined army, poverty and widespread official corruption, have welcomed the rebels as liberators. Mr Kabila insisted he must quit. "There can be no ceasefire or indeed elections in this country until Mobutu and

all he represents is removed and thrown away," he said.

President Mobutu offered to resign and hand over to an elected successor, but Mr Kabila is insisting that power be transferred to his rebel alliance in the transition process.

The son of a cook and a hotel maid, Mr Mobutu, who stands 6ft tall, was born in Léopoldville in Equateur province in 1930. Denounced as everything from a dictator to a thief, his critics accuse him of ruining what is potentially Africa's richest nation with a wealth of minerals and rich farmland.

A journalist turned soldier, he seized power in 1965 after the old Belgian Congo descended into chaos after independence.

Adopting a leopard-skin cap and bird-handled ebony cane as his trademarks, he has held onto power by keeping rivals in disarray, or by buying off his

trained presidential guard, he retreated to his opulent northern palace in Gbadolite, dubbed "Versailles in the Jungle", hurling defiance at his opponents. But the soldiers, angry at not receiving a pay rise, ran amok in Kinshasa in late 1991. France and Belgium sent in troops to protect foreign nationals. Looters killed at least 250 people.

Mr Mobutu's sacking in December 1992 of the reformist Prime Minister Étienne Tshisekedi, a one-time ally turned enemy, and the intimidation of the pro-democracy interim parliament by his presidential guard, brought further rebukes from abroad. France barred him from visiting his villa in the Riviera, while other countries denied him and his entourage visas.

Shrewd political manoeuvring enabled Mr Mobutu to neutralise a groundswell of

He held on to power by keeping rivals in disarray and buying off his enemies

public sympathy for Mr Tshisekedi. An impeachment threat by a transitional parliament came to nothing. Mr Mobutu, a pragmatist, began a process of rehabilitation with key donors — France, Belgium and the United States.

The 1994 exodus from Rwanda of over a million Hutus, fearing reprisals for the genocide of minority Tutsis there, worked in his favour. His co-operation helped to ease a humanitarian nightmare, bringing about a partial thaw in ties with the West. France softened its stance after he co-operated with a French military expedition to halt the Rwanda killings. In April 1996, Paris announced a resumption of aid after a five-year freeze.

In August 1996, Mobutu had prostate cancer surgery in Switzerland. In October, rebels took up arms in the east. As the Tutsi-led revolt spread, the rebels seized towns and territory and now control more than three-quarters of Zaire. Mr Mobutu, who spent much of the war convalescing in Europe, returned home on 22 March, in what many Zaire watchers saw as an attempt to negotiate a dignified withdrawal.

significant shorts

Arafat and Weizman move to rebuild peace

The Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, will meet Israeli President Ezer Weizman tomorrow in an effort to lay the groundwork for resuming the stalled peace negotiations.

The US Middle East envoy, Dennis Ross, is expected to follow up that meeting with a visit to the region later in the week. The flurry of diplomatic activity raised hopes that the peace process's downward slide may have been halted and that progress was being made toward restarting talks.

AP — Jerusalem

Algeria bombs kill 15

Two car bombs killed 15 people and wounded 23 in hotels in a thermal springs resort in north-west Algeria at the weekend, the Algerian newspaper *Le Matin* said. The newspaper said the bombs exploded 10 minutes apart in Sidi Bouhafnia, about 325km (200 miles) from the capital, Algiers.

Reuters — Paris

Revenge threat to Suu Kyi

Members of a military-sponsored mass organisation that participated in a mob attack on the Burmese democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi's motorcade last year vowed this weekend to punish the Nobel Peace Prize winner. More than 30,000 members of the Union Solidarity and Development Association condemned Ms Suu Kyi and the United States at a mass rally on Saturday in Rangoon.

AP — Bangkok

Racist Australian MP attacked

Protesters hurled tomatoes, eggs and insults yesterday in the second demonstration against a right-wing politician who has angered many Australians with her views denigrating Asians and Aborigines.

The attack on the independent MP Pauline Hanson was the most furious since she gained attention in Australia and in Asia with a provocative maiden speech in Parliament in September calling for an end to Asian immigration.

AP — Perth

Election violence in Indonesia

Indonesian soldiers wielding sticks dispersed a demonstration by Muslim youths in the central Javan city of Yogyakarta yesterday as tensions between contestants in Indonesia's election continued to rise.

Armed troops charged the protest by about 100 Muslim youths after they took to the streets to express anger against a recent attack on the local offices of the Muslim-oriented United Development Party (PPP).

Reuters — Yogyakarta

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arts

DANCE

Royal Ballet triple bill
ROH, London

Balanchine detector vans patrol the globe making quite sure that any ballet company planning to perform one of the master's works has a valid licence to do so. Anthony Dowell had allowed the Royal Ballet's rights to *Apollo* to lapse last year but planned to revive the work this spring regardless. Oh no you don't, said the Balanchine Trust. Not only does it safeguard the steps, costumes and staging of the productions in its care, it also exercises strict quality-control over casting. Although more than happy with Darcey Bussell and Jonathan Cope - not to mention NYCB's Igor Zelenko, who was scheduled to guest in the ballet - the Americans were uncertain about Ilek Mukhamedov. Maybe if he slimmed down? Could they give him the once-over at the final dress-rehearsal? This wasn't acceptable to Anthony Dowell, so the Trust withdrew the Royal Ballet's rights to perform the work at all and an 11th-hour substitute had to be found. Perhaps wishing to compensate Mukhamedov for the humiliating loss of *Apollo*, they settled on *The Judas Tree*. Kenneth MacMillan's dirty story of gang rape and betrayal. Whatever the technical merits of this nasty piece of work, it's a bloody strange ballet to substitute for the neo-classical masterpiece the audience had booked to see. Last Wednesday's crowd certainly seemed unhappy with the switch.

Vivian Durante, who created the role of the woman, always contrived to suggest a kind of slutish innocence that enhanced the moral ambiguity of this peculiar character. Gillian Revie as yet demonstrates neither the dramatic power nor technical finesse required. Mukhamedov danced with more energy than conviction. The audience certainly wasn't thrilled and the general applause seemed to be sheer relief that the ordeal was over. The individual bows were literally uncalled for.

Glen Tetley's new work, *Amores*, was the programme's second ballet and used Darcey Bussell, Deborah Bull, Leanne Benjamin, Stuart Cassidy, William Trevitt and Michael Nunn. They fill the stage with Tetley's dynamic chains of soaring jumps and arduous lifts but the ideas seemed to run out very early on. The bath-suits pastels of Nadine Bayliss' body-suits and Michael Torke's curiously incidental music threw into terrible relief the athletic blandness of the choreography. The movement certainly told us nothing about the dancers that we didn't already know. Our disappointment was heightened by the sad fact that the Royal Ballet has so few opportunities to work with international choreographers.

When the curtain went up on the white tutus and the sunny sky of Rosenthal blue that herald Balanchine's *Symphony in C*, a ripple of appreciative delight ran round the stalls like a purr of satisfaction. This, they seemed to be saying, was much more like it. As it turned out, it wasn't all that much like it, but even when underperformed and hobbled by Barry Wordsworth's artful approximation of *Bizet*, the glorious geometry of Balanchine's 1947 masterpiece ravishes the senses. Darcey Bussell, with her long lines and breathtaking facility, was born to dance Balanchine and her performance on its own would have been worth the licence fee.

Sat & 14, 15 May; Booking: 0171-304 4000

Louise Levene



Darcey Bussell in 'Amores' Laurie Lewis

The diva in me



Patti LuPone has had a remarkable number of near-encounters with Maria Callas: from almost attending the soprano's master classes to screen-testing for a Hollywood biopic. This week, the actress-singer is bringing her to life on stage, without singing a note. By Edward Seckerson

Sixteen years ago, Patti LuPone flew to Los Angeles to test for a movie role on Arianna Stassinopoulos' biography of Maria Callas. Call it premonition, call it advance notice, if you like, but someone had glimpsed the future. Looking now at the photograph currently displayed all over London on posters announcing Terrence McNally's smash hit Broadway play *Master Class*, you see what someone saw. Callas. In profile. Profound. Intense. Dangerous. A graven image in operatic terms. You see her, you hear her. You hear her, you know her. And you know what kept her.

Patti LuPone will tell you that she believes in destiny, in the pre-ordained, that she and La Divina had a date from the start. Right now they're pretty inseparable. It's called playing it by the method rule-book. LuPone speaks for Callas, through Callas, just as Callas would speak through "the voice" (which is how she always referred to it - in the third person). And so, Maria said this. Maria believed that, Maria would never have countenanced such an idea. Maria is close by. There are definitely three of us in this interview. LuPone speaks a lot about "honouring" Callas. She's fiercely defensive about her integrity, her subordination to "the voice", the craft, the career. No, she was not selfish. She rallied against selfish performers. She was selfish only for the composer... "She comprehended, realised, every note, every trill, every inflection... It's all in the music," she would say to her students. Come in pure, truthful..."

The *La Divina* Collection plays constantly in LuPone's dressing room at the Queen's Theatre. While her colleagues vocalise, she listens, digests. She has come to know all the nuances, and the reasons for them; she has come to share in the risk, the recklessness.

LuPone knows about recklessness, she knows about damage. She knows about laying herself on the line. She's had a hard time of it from some American critics who wish she wouldn't. Turn down the heat, turn down the volume, just turn it all down, they cry. But it's in the blood. Mediterranean blood, Mediterranean temperament. She's never known any different. She'd arrive hoarse for her singing lessons at the Juilliard School in New York City - the side-effect of too many cigarettes and show-tunes. Well, this was Juilliard preparatory, and she was a teenager.

Someone had seen and heard her potential. The voice was certainly there. For a time it was thought to be an operatic voice (remember we're talking here of the great-grand-niece and namesake of the celebrated lyric coloratura, Adelina Patti, sometime queen of Covent Garden). But opera didn't attract her. Childhood experiences at the old Met had left an indelible impression. She remembers *Samson and Delilah*. Or rather, she remembers two very fat singers and a large bowl of fruit. Her body was better suited to song and dance. So on the day of her classical audition at Juilliard (she doesn't remember what she sang, but she remembers someone on the panel filing their nails), she got on a plane to LA to audition for the Melody Tent. You can imagine what kind of shows they put on.

Eventually, it was the Drama Division at Juilliard that claimed her. She started her career as a founding member of John Houseman's *The Acting Company*. And when the emotional stakes were so high that she could no longer speak - isn't that the definition of musical theatre? - she sang. And

the voice was a scorcher. A ready-to-go Reno Sweeney (the feisty Cole Porter heroine for whom "Anything Goes"), an *Evita* in waiting. And if Norma Desmond should ever sing... Perhaps it's better we stay silent on that one. Shh does.

LuPone is now roughly the same age that Callas was when she conducted her now legendary master classes at Juilliard. And before you ask, yes, she was there then, and no, she didn't go. The guilt is still with her. She's heard the tapes, seen the videos, and is now living the play. And, in living the play, she is reminded, she says, of a dedication and a sacrifice and a commitment that is rarely encountered today. Unless you happen to be preparing McNally's *Master Class*. It's a marathon. It took her seven and a half weeks

great tragic heroine it celebrates - is nothing if not operatic. Meaning fanciful, extravagant theatre before it is documentary. The master class to end all master classes. And we've seen a few.

What a contrast, oddly voyeuristic, spectator sport this is. Singing legends as exhibits, "on-stage" and yet not on-stage, performing and yet not performing. Some treating the occasion as some kind of "stand-up" routine. Like the celebrated baritone (and I have this one on good authority) who, before going out on-stage, asked the young tenor if he could be sure that the problematic B-flat was a problem so that he had something to work with, so that he - in other words - could make a drama out of the crisis. I also have this indelible image of Elisabeth Schwarzkopf quelling the rapture

wishing for a moment that anyone should think it was a one-off, a fluke. Schwarzkopf did it again, and again, while Callas laid hands on her as if she were some freak of nature. Who knows what the subtext of that one was...

The subtext of McNally's play is the elusiveness of great artistry, and what it costs in human terms. It's that aspect of the play which consumes LuPone's energy. She doesn't find anything about the play negative. "It's the tragedy of Callas's life that is negative." In that, she is markedly different from Zoe Caldwell, who first played the role on Broadway - "widely different", according to the director, Leonard Foglia. There's a line in the play where she, Callas, announces that what she possesses is "something that can't be taught or passed on or copied or even talked about". Caldwell, played the edge, the cynicism of the line. She was grand, she was patronising. LuPone aims to play the toughness but not the condescension. "She drives the students hard, of course she does. That's all transported. But Zoe Caldwell suggested that she had not heard a single note, rather that she was simply preoccupied with her own thoughts, her own reminiscences. "No, I don't see it that way. She's reawakened. This is the first time that someone in the class has really opened up to her. And it's like a flirtation - this young Cavaradossi, whose only thoughts are for her: 'Il mio solo pensiero, Tosca sei tu.' And maybe because I'm that much younger than Zoe, and because I have access to music, I can convey a different feeling. It isn't over for me yet. And yet some things are receding. It's like Callas sees in this moment what was and what might be no more. And that's very moving, I hope."

So how does it feel: a singer among singers and not a note to sing? "It's a cakewalk - it really is. Hey, I can go on stage hoarse. I can go on stage with a cold - and I can use it! Strangely enough, though, there's actually more, not less, stress on those two tiny muscles. There's a lot of attack and anger in this role - some of it very abrupt. Now, when you sing, you remember to breathe. You remember to place. When you're acting, it's not exactly exciting to remember all that stuff, is it...?"

And this lady does so like to be exciting, and yes, reckless, and yes, high on the emotion of the moment. McNally, she says, has written arias - not speeches, "arias" - and with the sound of La Divina herself, interwoven through their fabric, it's as if she, Patti LuPone, is singing. It's been 12 years since she was last in a "straight" play. People want the voice, people want the musicals, "and they haven't always been fun", she adds pointedly. Still, if she ever does get this little problem called Maria out of her system, then London's bracing itself for that one-woman show of hers. *Opens tomorrow, Queen's Theatre, Shaftesbury Avenue, London W1 (0171-494 5590)*



Patti LuPone as Maria Callas (above, picture Geraint Lewis) and (inset) the real thing (Hulton Getty)

The bells! The bells! As the vocal chorus rang out a canon in imitation of the lost city of Dunwich's ghostly clangers, and it went on and on and on. Quasimodo didn't seem like such an unreasonable guy after all. But vocal-bells apart, this site-specific music-theatre installation by the group 3 or 4 Composers, first performed as part of the Barclays New Stages Festival in Nottingham last November, and restaged here amid the decayed splendour of an old industrial building, was wonderfully inventive.

If the music - composed and performed by Jocelyn Pook, Helen Ottaway, Simon Rackham and Melanie Pappenheim - sometimes seemed to be spread rather thinly over the hour-long running time, the imaginative staging more than made up for it. Deborah Thomas's set of seemingly free-floating furniture hanging by wires from the ceiling, and

INSTALLATION ART

Still Ringing

The Old Leadworks, Bristol

choreographer Thom Stuart's orchestrations of expressionist movements from the locally recruited cast of extras, were vividly alive.

Inspired by the legends of spirit-world campagnol from the Suffolk town that fell into the sea, and with libretti taken from - among other sources - the shipping forecast, the company successfully communicated the sense of a drowning world through a series of brilliantly staged poetic images: the poignant futility of hands cupping water; the uncomfortable dance of bare soles balancing precariously on pebbles. Using the depth of the building to maximum effect, the show unwound with a real

sense of space, with obscure ensemble-movements in the farthest reaches echoed by front-of-stage performances by Pook and Ottaway on violins and the magnetic appeal of Pappenheim's extraordinary voice and presence. Mixing live and pre-recorded sources, the score veered between Packham's melancholy French horn solos and Ottaway and Pook's ambient and ethnic variations on devotional music, with a strong sense of emblematic English pastoral to the fore. And as they played, the female chorus hopped scuttled around the set like a regiment of monstrous girls from a painting by Paula Rego. The closing movement,

written by Pook - the composer of everyone's favourite mobile-phone ad, the Orange number that uses a sample of Kathleen Ferrier's voice on "Blow the Wind Southerly" - provided a wonderful climax, as Pappenheim walked round the set pushing the hanging chairs, doors, windows and dressers into motion.

An country-kitchen furniture flew dream-like through the air, and the air became water, *Still Ringing* more than fulfilled its promise. Though there were frustrating moments when either too much or too little appeared to be going on, the overall mix of music and *mise-en-scène* was satisfactorily resolved, with the whole amounting to a rewarding blend of the English, and the English-centric, traditions. By the end, even the hellish bells sounded like a good idea.

Phil Johnson

Martin Rydall is a self-made man; a man who made himself by making grids and man-holes. This piece of exposition could be described as the signature of his creator, Peter Whelan, in that it exemplifies the detailing that gives depth to the playwright's worlds. Whelan's craftsmanship goes hand-in-hand with a *fascination* with work, which informed his superb play about the pottery industry, *The Bright and Bold Design*. In *Overture*, premiered here in Peter Cheeseman's attentive production, he is returning close to that home-ground, again pondering the relation between utility and beauty. Having sold the iron-work foundry, Martin is set upon re-making himself, this time in the service of art.

The setting is a neglected country house which, together with an architect, Philip, is restoring to its 18th-century glory with the zest of a boy. The closing movement,

THEATRE

Overture

New Vic, Newcastle-under-Lyme

catching frogs. Indeed, the project is itself a dream from boyhood. Of the day when, trespassing in the grounds, he caught a glimpse through French windows of a woman in a yellow dress in a music-room. Martin is determined to recreate that room and has even hired the improbable new-ageish, rebarbative Sian (Sara Griffiths) to teach him piano so that he can play the Debussy he is certain belongs to the idyll.

Andrew Neil's Martin has a blustery, scatty charm that can only make us admire his practical energy and eagerness to be reborn. But we soon recog-

nise that there is something unconvincing, even desperate, in his desire to leave the past behind. We notice how his heritage speak all comes from Alan Rotwell's pursued, self-less sibily, there is the glowing return of his footloose son Ralph (Sean O'Callaghan). He and his brisk, practical sister, Aileen (excellent Sarah Mortimer) are aggrieved in different ways at their father from way back and cannot turn over a new leaf lightly. Martin, it seems, is carrying pain in his admiration of sandalwood.

Yet, for all Ralph's cries about a house built on cruelty,

and his self-laceration at leaving his sick mother in his father's uncaring hands, I was never convinced of Martin's dark nature. Except, however, when he instantly repudiates Aileen when he believes she has betrayed him. Andrew Neil's puckish countenance freezes into a frightening hatred then, and we see how he has willed the ensuing destruction.

This is a thorough play that moves with a restorer's patience and care, but also with his slowness. At its best, it has the texture of a realist novel but the key characters of Ralph and Sian are little more than ciphers. As always with this fine, independent writer, the deliberation of the work is never less than absorbing, but on this occasion, the gleam of discovery is not quite bright enough. *Booking: 01782 777962* To 24 May

Jeffrey Wainwright

Tomorrow in the Tabloid: Tom Lubbock on the late flowering of David Hockney; Michael Glover on psychiatry and poetry

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features



Graham McPherson, aka Suggs: Madness, he says, became the family he never had. He loved the other boys in the band. They loved him. He belonged

Photograph: Glynn Griffiths

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Exile from the house of fun

Interview



Deborah Ross
talks to
SUGGS

Suggs used to be the lark boy in the pork-pie hat and Mod suit who, throughout much of the Eighties, looked like he was having a lot of fun while having a lot of hits. "Our house, in the middle of the street ... Or, if you like: 'It must be love, love, love ...' Or ... no, no. I must stop myself here. I'm sure you don't want the entire song list. But I was, at one time, very fond of Madness, as you can see. 'Welcome to the house of fun, da-da-da-da-daa'.

Madness were, and I think most would agree with me here, a great band with a great sound. They were reggae and ska and fairground with lots of berserk instrumentation and big sax noises thrown in. They were Suggs jumping about and singing in a very British broadway about his house, his baggy trousers or his girl being mad at him. Madness were original and honest and looked as if they never took things too seriously, which they didn't. The band were very good, says Suggs, at keeping each others' egos in check. "People would kick your legs out from under you all the time. Talking to David Bowie? You wanker! How much did you spend on those tarts? £20 each? At Liberty? You gone mad, wanker?"

Anyway, Suggs is now 36. Or 37. He can't quite remember which. He is still handsome, although not in that larky, joyous, boyish way. He is chunky, with a very square jaw, big shoulders and big hands, like prize hams. Today, he is wearing a blond Jasper Conran suit (Jasper Conran? You gone mad?) teamed with a neon blue shirt. He does

n't know where the shirt is from. Channel 5 got it for him. "That's the greatest thing about doing telly," he beams. "They get your clothes for you."

Suggs now hosts Channel 5's *Night Fever*, a sort of karaoke quiz show on Saturday evenings. The show's not great, frankly, unless you are B-list celebrities (Sonia, Sam Fox, and those are the ones you've heard of) pretending they are The Carpenters. No, Suggs doesn't think it's naff. He's long fancied doing telly. "I would look at Chris Evans and think: 'I can do that!'" He has also just recorded "Blue Day", a single for Chelsea FC, which is released today. No, this isn't naff either. He has long supported Chelsea. It was an honour. Yes, he does have to work. No, Madness never made him lastingly rich. It could have, but "I fridged away on eating, drinking and making merry," he says.

The thing about being a pop star is that, unless you are Paul McCartney, you will probably have one day to face not being a pop star any more. Suggs has had to face this and is facing it still. Recently, he tried to get his two teenage daughters backstage at a Blur concert. "I queued up with all the other losers going, 'excuse me, excuse me,' until my shame dragged me away," he says.

To his credit, Suggs says this cheerfully rather than despondently. He is still handsome, although not in that larky, joyous, boyish way. He is chunky, with a very square jaw, big shoulders and big hands, like prize hams. Today, he is wearing a blond Jasper Conran suit (Jasper Conran? You gone mad?) teamed with a neon blue shirt. He does

something he swore he would never do. He consulted a psychiatrist. And? Well, the psychiatrist told him that if he was to come to terms with not being Suggs of Madness any more, then he would have to come to terms with a lot of other things, too. In particular, he might want to go back and look at what went on when he was plain Graham McPherson (his real name). His schools chopped and changed constantly. It was hard to make friends, and even when he did it wasn't as if he could invite them back for spaghetti hoops on toast. It would have been too embarrassing for all concerned. Often, they had no bathroom.

Yes, he was very lonely as a kid, and perhaps no more so than when he was eight and his mother dispatched him to his Auntie Diana, his sister, in Haverfordwest, south Wales. He thought he was going on a holiday. Trouble was, no one came to pick him up for three years. What was his mother doing during this period? He hasn't a clue. It was, he says, "a mystery."

Yes, he was very hitter. And full of guilt. (If he'd been more lovable, would he have been dumped like this?) And he was angry, too, with an anger that, he says, refused to go away for a very long time.

His Auntie Diana was kind to him. And, at first, he liked being in the country. It made a change from being squashed up with his mother. He liked the fields and the freedom and going about eating apples and shooting rats. But Auntie Diana had three children of her own, whom he got along with well enough, but still, he never felt he belonged or was truly loved. When, later, I ask him if he can remember receiving any affection whatsoever during his childhood he laughs then says: "Well, whenever I ran away the people who brought me straight back always seemed very nice."

At 11, just after he had started at a Welsh grammar school, he was sent back to his mother in London, his aunt and uncle having decided to split up. He joined his mum in her flat over a carpet shop on Tottenham Court Road and was sent to a tough boys' comprehensive off the Finchley Road. On his first day, he wore his Welsh grammar school uniform. Come lunchtime, he got his dinner on his head and ice-cream in his face. The first song he ever wrote, "Baggy Trousers", was about the school. "Naughty boys in nasty schools/ Headmasters breaking all the rules/ Having fun and playing fools/ Breaking up the wood-work tools." Needless to say, he didn't learn very much there, which he thinks a shame, because he had liked learning.

From 13, he stopped going to school, ticked a lot of records and changed his name. He chose Suggs from a jazz dictionary. Apparently, there is a jazz flautist called Pete Suggs. It was tiring going about saying, "I'm not Graham any more, I'm Suggs," but he was determined, unlike his best mate. "He changed his

name to Keg. But he gave up after a couple of weeks. He got fed up of it."

Madness were formed in 1977. They were six teenagers who'd been brought together by a north London youth club and a love of Jamaican and jazz music. They practised in everyone's front room apart from Suggs', because he didn't have a front room. They were brilliantly innocent. When they went on their first ever tour, one of the band members said he couldn't go to Wales because he didn't have a passport. Later, they got to stay in Gstaad with David Bowie who has a house there, but they never became wholly starstruck. "Unfortunately, Bowie was going through one of his straight periods. He wasn't drinking or anything. 'Night boys,' he'd say at 9pm. It was rather disappointing."

All in all, Madness put 21 singles into the Top 20 before getting bored ("once the initial veneer wore off, it became just a job") and coming apart. At which point, Suggs came apart too.

Madness, he says, became the family he never had. It sounds clichéd, he knows, but that doesn't make it any the less true. He loved the other boys in the band. They loved him. He belonged. ("The biggest high was the sense of belonging.") He was wanted. He adored performing for audiences who, in turn, seemed to adore him. Then it all went. And he couldn't cope. He went to the psychiatrist. He thought he had nothing to lose.

"I was feeling very frightened, very scared, very insecure. The psychiatrist was brilliant. He could have given me a lot of theory and told me to come back daily for the next 65 years - what I told him set his pencil on fire - but instead he told me I might be better off just accepting myself for who I am. Having never known any security, I would always feel insecure, and the thing to do was accept that and just get on with life. I have since become much more philosophical. Yes, I do miss the fame. I still miss Madness. When we re-formed for two gigs in 1992 and 1994, it was fantastic. To give everyone jumping up and down again was just such a high."

"But, basically, I'm the sort of bloke who likes going down the pub, singing, and taking his kids to the seaside. That's who I am, and I'm happy with that." Truly? Yes, he insists, "truly."

Suggs has a wife and two daughters without whom, he says, he would probably have stopped functioning a long time ago. He married Anne, formerly the lead singer with Deaf School, in 1982. Thankfully, he says, she comes from a very stable background so has been able to instruct him in the ways of family life. He is mad, he says, about his kids. They are teenagers now, but still he can't wait for "the two noisy hooligans" to get back from school so he can give them big bear hugs. Yes, of course, he'd have liked his parents to have felt this way about him. But they had too many of their own problems. It was never to do with him. It was to do with them. He can see that now. He isn't angry any more, he says.

So, Suggs is a bloke who has had to come to terms with a lot of things. Perhaps he's succeeded. Perhaps he hasn't.

Whatever, he used to make good music and, hopefully, will do so again. He has a solo album coming out in the summer. Meanwhile, you can always play the old hits, which are as good today as they ever were. "My girl's mad at me ... 'Dance? I'd love to.'

Kids. Aren'tcha sick of them?

America's champion of the cot-free zone wants the same rights parents have. By Tim Cornwell

Build a palace and they will come; in America, build a soap box and someone will listen. Leslie Lafayette is the author of *Why Don't You Have Kids? - Living a Full Life Without Parenthood* and the founder of the Child-Free Network, an organisation designed to give voice to the childless "by chance or choice".

It claims only 2,000 paid-up members, but Ms Lafayette's complaint that childless people are virtual non-citizens in America has earned her plenty of air time, including the highest chat shows: Oprah, Geraldo, *Good Morning America*. "If you people are as baby-happy as this culture," she begins, "then you could use a little slap in the face."

She promises a rousing interview and, sure enough, she delivers, blaming breeding families for everything from over-crowded national parks to nasty scenes in restaurants. Ms Lafayette demands not to be confused with a "crotchety old witch that hates kids". But it is plain she loves nothing better than stirring it up. For three-quarters of an hour, she sings the virtues of a child-free life in a country where the raising of children is virtually a religious act, and "family" is the cornerstone of morality.

At one point, she compares children to "other people's litter". If the human race ended tomorrow, she says, the world would still keep turning. Most parents she has heard from say they would "never do it again", she says earnestly. Then parenting "quite difficult, frustrating, very demanding and very expensive".

A schoolteacher for 17 years, Ms Lafayette found her calling during the election campaign of 1992, when everyone from Dan Quayle to Bill Clinton was expounding on family values. "It was really just too much to stomach. You didn't have kids, you were completely invisible. I paid taxes; I was a homeowner; I had made a contribution, and no one cared about my needs at all."

The family-values bandwagon did not stop with the 1992 election. The first piece of legislation Bill Clinton signed as President was the Family Leave Bill, establishing a three-month leave of absence for birth or family emergencies. As his first four-year term ended, several senior cabinet members resigned to spend more

'Why are we rewarding people for having children?'

time with spouses and children. It led a spokeswoman for New York's Families and Work Institute to observe, proudly, that Family with a capital F had "become an important value, even compared to being at the centre of power in the most powerful country in the world".

In response, Ms Lafayette has championed the cause of childless people in the American workplace against a corporate culture that boasts of being increasingly family-friendly. It's an issue that has struck home. A serious grievance among childless adults, it appears, is that parents get the pick of vacation time, flexible hours and sick leave, not to mention in-house nurseries, and medical benefits, and sheher from tough assignments or arduous travel. Statistics show that in America 66 per cent of employees at any time are *not* rearing children under 18. And nearly half, in one poll, said parents received more support from employers than non-parents.

Some companies have been adjusting their policies to redress the balance. Eastman Kodak, for example, which Ms Lafayette holds up as a glowing example, now offers employees a three-month leave of absence for a "personal unique opportunity", the alternative to family leave. Others, of course, have extended pensions and benefits to "domestic partners", gay or heterosexual.

Work aside, the tax law encourages people to have children, Ms Lafayette complains. Under US law, it is even illegal to have adults-only housing, except in a retirement community where everyone is over 55. "My question is, why are we rewarding people for having children in a situation in which we are downsizing, we have pollution problems, the market is shrinking? I don't think it's any special deal that needs to be rewarded."

Ms Lafayette, 52, divorced and a resident of Sacramento, state capital of California, had a miscarriage in her early forties that was "quite devastating", but her marriage was not a strong one and she wanted a child for the wrong reasons, she says. She runs a cafe serving breakfast and lunch where there are, yes, booster seats and crayons are supplied. "I can't tell people not to bring kids; that would be against the law. And I personally don't think it would be the right thing to do."

But I see the TV producers dream stick her on a talk show opposite anyone from the "God and Family" crowd. "There are so many incredible people who were childless, starting with Jesus himself," she says. "I think he was very busy doing his work. Florence Nightingale, Beethoven, the Wright Brothers, Mother Teresa, Jane Austen - they don't have to be objects of pity and scorn."

CLASSIFIED

Announcements

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14 the leader page

Will the real Tory parties please stand up?

The fate of the Conservative Party is not a private matter. Yes, Tory MPs' preoccupation with place and personality is understandable; the disarray of Central Office and the party in the country follows naturally from Thursday night's dramatic turn of events. But Tory MPs should not lose sight of their constitutional duty. They are Her Majesty's Opposition. They may share the task of keeping Labour honest with the Liberal Democrats and, in Wales and Scotland, with the nationalists. In these heady days, with their support in the House of Commons so assured, Labour ministers might be tempted to abuse their power; in their inexperience they might break rules. Labour will, we hope, engage quickly with the task of constitutional renewal, especially the reformation and modernisation of the House of Commons itself. But until it does, the old adage holds: proper procedure is the best protection we have against executive tyranny and the Tories, truncated and demoralised as they may be, have a vital job to do, for example in revitalising the Public Accounts Committee and the select committees of the Commons. Recent Tory experience of the corruption of office ought to make them all the more alert to its first signs on the Labour benches.

Yet the political effectiveness of the Conservative Party depends on its honesty about itself and the meaning of the appointment of a Tory version of Peter

electorate's rejection at the ballot box of its stands on Europe, social policy, parliamentary probity. Tory MPs may rush ahead and elect a new leader but the contest, however exciting, cannot substitute for the ideological re-working that must take place. That in return requires stern contemplation of the possibility that the Tories may never again be a united party. John Major deliberately precipitated this scramble by announcing his immediate departure - and his action was all the more calculated since he knew the very infrastructure of the parliamentary Tory party had been destroyed. Pique or revenge? Whatever his intention, he is the impresario of a brawl. The Marquess of Queensberry has evidently not been invited to write the rules. One of yesterday's choice cuts (unnamed ex-minister on William Hague's likely hair loss and hence unelectability): "this guy is a goifball".

The Tories owe their country and the millions who voted for them last week better than this. Conservatism is evidently not going to depart for an extended away-day and produce some "mission statement". Inevitably the Tories will be tempted merely to react to the Blair phenomenon, trying like alchemists of old to discern how the base metal of Old Labour was turned into political gold. There will be calls - we have heard them already - for the

Mandelson, for the stiffening of Central Office's authority over unruly local associations, for feminising the Tories' pin-striped ranks. But these are means to an end - which is what?

The old answer, that the Tories wanted power broadly to maintain the position of the "haves", just won't do. Too many of their "isms" clash and conflict. Are the Tories to be a party of an intellectually consistent conservatism, one unfriendly towards change in the way the government is run but which also dislikes change (for example lost jobs) brought about by the operations of the capitalist system?

Abstract thought comes most easily to the likes of John Redwood, but all the Tory contenders are obliged to work through some key ideas. What is it exactly that the governments of nation states can do to affect their comparative advantage in the face of global tides of trade and investment; why are the French right wrong in asserting that globalisation demands a stronger European federation not a weaker one?

The Thatcher-Major years bequeath two great puzzles to Tories. One is how to justify their refusal to modernise our politics when advocating wholesale change and renewal in the economic

field. To argue, for example, that trades unions are the enemies of economic progress without accepting that the operations of a landed syndicate in the House of Lords also constitutes a barrier to forward movement in government is not merely inconsistent, it is self-defeating. The other deep paradox is not new. Since the Victorian era, Toryism has tried to be simultaneously liberal in economics and illiberal in social affairs. The task becomes ever harder. Post Major, in the light of this election result, the Conservative Party must think through the consequences of the fact that there is such a thing as society.

And above all there is Europe. There is nothing inevitable about Toryism as a single political formation. That there will always be one or more political parties which espouse the interests of the possessors of property - that is a reasonable prediction based on the structure of politics in all the advanced democracies. But not all such parties are nationalist. The property or business party could easily define itself stoutly in favour of Europe, single currency and all. Why not two parties of property, divided by their European attitudes? If Labour were to seize the helm and make an indelible mark on the history of this country by reforming our electoral system, the entire basis of party affiliation might change. All of which is a long-winded way of saying that in a post-ideological age

Michael Howard and Kenneth Clarke might as well lead different parties - Mr Clarke said as much about John Redwood yesterday. The party of Rorke's Drift (yes, that was the key historical reference advanced by Mr Howard in a Sunday newspaper) cannot surely be the same as the pro-business, socially concerned, pro-European entity Mr Clarke has spent his political life trying to build.

A tighter rein for voluntary bodies

Shenanigans at the National Confederation of Parent-Teacher Associations raise questions about how well voluntary organisations are run. Ideally the National Council for Voluntary Organisations should act as a guarantor. But at present nobody outside their ranks is able to keep tabs on how effective they are. Charities are obliged by law to account for how they raise and spend their money. The Charities Commission has powers of supervision but often seems unable to head off problems. Voluntary bodies such as the NCPTA, children's charities and the National Trust ought to be free from government interference, but they also occupy "public space" and the public needs to be assured they are behaving properly.



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Let this be the last absurd 'landslide'

Sir: Your leading article of 3 May points out in words the arithmetical absurdity of the election result and the need to look at our first-past-the-post system. The actual figures are set out in the table.

Our system has yet again produced a House of Commons that bears little relationship to what the voters voted for. The Labour landslide is in reality a relatively small percentage shift in voting patterns producing a wholly disproportionate percentage change in the number of seats obtained by the parties. Labour did not achieve an overall majority of votes but it has been given absolute control of Parliament. It is over-represented by a staggering 126 seats. The Conservatives are under-represented by 39 seats and the Liberal Democrats by 66 seats.

As usual, there are other distortions. The Liberal Democrats doubled their number of seats on a 1 per cent reduction in their share of the vote; the Conservatives obtained nearly 20 per cent of the vote in Wales and Scotland, but they have no seats in either, leading to

	Lab	Cons	LD
Votes %	44.5	31.4%	
Seats %	63.6	24.76%	
Seats won	419	165.46	
Seats if in proportion to votes	293	204.12	

the jibe from their opponents that they are now a parochial English party. These distortions cannot be tolerated in a modern democracy.

Labour and the Liberal Democrats are committed to a referendum on PR. It is to be hoped that the Conservatives, after what happened to them on 1 May, will also see the need for radical reform. The Labour government must not change its position on a referendum on PR, now that it is the beneficiary of the distortion in our electoral system. It must use the absolute power given to it by that distortion to reform the voting system before the next general election.

DAVID L COMES
Berchamsted, Hertfordshire

Sir: Tony Blair could not have been more wrong when he said that Britain is not a landslide country. It is precisely because we have first-past-the-post voting that such extreme results are possible. Its replacement by a new system should be a priority of the new government; otherwise we may see a Conservative landslide sometime in the next century.

PJ STEWART
Oxford

Sir: As my son pointed out to me in the early hours of 2 May, it's quite a thought that, under the proportional representation systems used in most of Europe, one of the 'Tory' cabinet would have lost their seats.

HENRY ETTINGHAUSEN
Professor of Spanish
University of Southampton

Sir: A stunning result for New Labour; a splendid one for the Lib Dems. But will this be the dawn of new electoral bop or the confirmation of electoral injustice? Here in Teignbridge, out of a 62,945 people who voted, 38,266 (60.8 per cent) of us did not get the MP we wanted. We are effectively disenfranchised.



Peter Sorensen

New Commons, same old chamber

So, a clarion call to Mr Blair and Mr Ashdown: we unseen, unheard, forgotten, and disgruntled voters look to you for electoral reform.

JENNIFER BASSETT
Exminster, Devon

Unsleeping ministers

Sir: I hope the reforming zeal of the new administration stretches to changing the procedures for transferring power from one party to the next. It is ridiculous that men and women who are exhausted after a gruelling six-week election campaign are taking over as ministers without time for proper rest and recuperation.

Anyooe who has read the diaries and biographies of senior politicians will know that they will have to digest huge amounts of information and make very big decisions in the next few days. It would be far better if there was a week between election day and the take-over of the new ministers in order to allow them to rest before they take up the biggest jobs of their lives and start to make huge decisions that affect all our lives.

PETER BURKE
London E2

Green Tories

Sir: Since the Conservatives' constituency seems more or less reduced to just the English shire counties, is it time to consider changing the party emblem from a blue torch to a green wellington?

JOHN MOON
Andover, Hampshire

Big win for the no-vote party

Sir: The suggestion that the way to get young people to vote is to make sure they are "thoroughly trained in judgement" through "the compulsory teaching of philosophy in schools" (Letters, 29 April) might well have the reverse effect. The more people are educated, the more likely they are to see through the lies and limitations of all the political

Post letters to Letters to the Editor, and include a daytime telephone number. Fax: 0171-293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk. E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. We regret we are unable to acknowledge unpublished letters.

Out, out, out!

Sir: Following Labour's landslide victory, are there any other readers who would like to join me in a pressure group dedicated to the cause of ensuring that the likes of Lord Lloyd-Webber, Paul Daniels and Frank Bruno do not renege upon their promises to leave the country?

JUNE DIAMANTI
Newcastle upon Tyne

We claim a tactical victory

Sir: No one can doubt that informed and targeted tactical voting helped to win the day. Not only did it turn a Labour victory into a Tory rout; it also delivered the largest group of third party MPs since the 1920s.

Enfield Southgate's young victor Stephen Twigg acknowledged that it was Liberal Democrats voting "effectively" that helped his Labour team deprive Michael Portillo of his seat.

GROT! feel entirely vindicated - despite "spin doctor" hostility throughout the election campaign. Tactical voting has beaten Tory hegemony under first past the post. Now we must all push to replace it with a proportional and more representative system.

RICHARD DENTON-WHITE
Co-chair
GROT: The Tactical Voting
Campaign
London N16

Asylum blot

Sir: Your heading quotation from Jean Jacques Rousseau (1 May), to the effect that the English people are free only during the period of an election, is given an ironic echo in another article on the front page. Here we learn that the same freedom is enjoyed and evidently exploited by civil servants who are suddenly freed from accountability to

government or Parliament. The revelation that 12,000 "sensitive" asylum cases have been "resolved" by the Immigration and Nationality Directorate through a special unit - "coincidentally" put to work after the dissolution of Parliament - should be a source of national shame. Organisations concerned with refugees and asylum-seekers have repeatedly called for an increase in the number of trained staff available to deal with the huge backlog of asylum applications - all to no avail.

Suddenly we learn that the cases of 600 people have been dealt with in three weeks, during a political vacuum which means that they have been deprived of support or advice from Members of Parliament and may be deported without proper government accountability.

Too much of our immigration law depends on unopublished guidelines interpreted subjectively by largely unaccountable officials, but this marks a new blot on our reputation as a haven for the oppressed.

CHAS RAWNS
Christian Action for Justice in
Immigration Law
Glasgow

Twist to the left

Sir: Mr Ryan's strictures on champagne socialists (Letters, 3 May) might carry more weight if he had not ignored the advice of those who make the stuff in Epernay. Never twist the cork: hold it still and gently twist the bottle.

COLIN ROCHESTER
London SE21

Moral majority

Sir: I am experiencing just one problem coming to terms with the result of the general election. My moral high ground has been invaded and now it's crowded up here. Just where did all these people come from?

MADELINE HEANEY
Northampton

That's politics, but it hurts

The public
enjoyed seeing
Ken Clarke race
his belongings
into a tree

obituaries / gazette

Hughie Green

Tall, talented, handsome yet homespun; confident, creative, comical and corny; defiant, determined, beloved and even brave – this was Hughie Green, "and I mean that most sincerely, folks, I really do!"

I bow without blushing one of his many catch-phrases coined down the years. Remember "It's make-your-mind-up-time!" ... "Let's take a look at the Clapometer!" ... "This is your show, folks, and I do mean you!" ... "And for little Miss Bonnie Langford, Opportunity Knocks!" To get full value from the latter, you need to shout in your broadest transatlantic accent, "Apt-er-toon-ity Narks-er!" And that was, unusually for those days, not entirely faked. For, with Hughie Green, there was always a strong Canadian connection.

Green, the first home-grown host of that breed of broadcast series known as audience participation shows, and father of the countless talentless teenagers who infest our daytime and late-night cables today, had fishy beginnings: his father was known as Canada's Fishmonger General, Hugh Green, a staunch Scotsman, emigrated to Canada in 1907, but returned to London in 1917, where Hugh Jnr was born in 1920.

Showbiz surrounded the boy from as early as he could remember. Every weekend, his father invited round the top stars from the local theatres, and impromptu sing-songs ensued, starring Evelyn Laye, perhaps, or Jack Buchanan who might throw in a hit of a tap dance.

One of these regulars would have a great effect on the life of the young Hughie. This was the eccentric comedian Harry Tate, who would twiddle his false walrus moustache at the boy as he shouted his trademark, "Goodbye-eel!" Tate became the boy's godfather and took him on a stage for the first time in his life when he was seven years old. Not that the audience at the London Coliseum were any the wiser; inside Tate's comedy aeroplane lay young Green, cranking the propeller. Thus were born, in one fell swoop, Hughie Green's twin loves, which would last his lifetime: the stage and flying.

In 1927 came the first contact with Canada. The family took a holiday trip and Hughie sang a song in the ship's concert wearing a kilt provided by his father. Unfortunately the elastic top was a trifle loose. The song was called "The Old Lady in the Market Street Car"; what happened to the kilt is not recorded.

Home again in Golders Green, Hughie, now 11, did a turn at the local cinema's talent competition, and then with some chums took his first step towards destiny. He put on his own show. Seeing that the Royal National Hospital was appealing for £50,000, he hired the Hoop Lane Hall for five shillings and with a gang of Golders Green pals, including one billed as "Baby Sunshine", they staged two hours of variety, at the end of which he was proud to present the hospital with a cheque for £4.3s. Inspired by this success, Green did it again at the slightly more up-market St Albans Church Hall (hiring charge 1 guinea), and turned in a total of £12.6s.2d.

The Harry Tate influence came again in 1931, when the 11-year-old Green made his professional debut at the Garrick Theatre. It was in an old-time music hall bill chaired by veteran comedian Charles Austin. Sticking on a spare Harry Tate moustache which he always carried, Green sang "Gilbert The Filber", Tate, concluding with the classic "Goodbye-eel!"

Meanwhile the all-kid shows continued in local halls, finally coming to the attention of the BBC. Bryan Michie, the fat tale-spouter for Saturday night's top programme, *In Town Tonight*, came secretly to see the show and recommended that Green be given a go on the radio.

It was 1933. Green was 13. and his signature tune was "The Wearing O' The Green". Three minutes on Saturday night radio and by Monday he was a star. Eric Maschwitz, head of variety, and John Watt, chief producer, came up with a contract and the young impresario and his equally young cast were wireless stars – for three 15-minute programmes. Not too many of these talented gangsters made it to the top like their boy boss, but mention may be made of Lauri Lupino Lane, who certainly did, as did young Connie Wood, once she had changed her name to Kathy Kay and met Billy Cotton and his band.

In 1934, the newish field of cine-variety gave the Gang a chance and they toured the Paramount Cinema circuit starting off at the Brixton Astoria and finishing at the Alhambra, Leicester Square. Between shows, good old Harry Tate came to the rescue and cast Hughie as his cheeky office boy in a stage sketch which was put on film by the Pathéone

and his partner with Margaret Lockwood continued in *Melody and Romance* (1937), which climaxed excitingly with Green saving the swooning star from the Crystal Palace fire. All exciting stuff, but no more films came along until 1939 when a very small quota company built *Down Our Alley*, adding his personality, later reissuing the film under the title of *Gang Show*, much to the irritation of the Boy Scout showman-in-chief, Ralph Reader.

Green's flying career took off when he was 19. He flew solo at Doncaster just three months before the declaration of the Second World War. Volunteering immediately he was rejected by the RAF. He broke up his Gang and went to Canada with his father. He became an AC2 in the Royal Canadian Air Force, and soon rose to be Sergeant Instructor for the Link Trainers.

Given special leave to act on Broadway in the propaganda play *Golden Wings*, he opened on the day before Pearl Harbor. Returning immediately to Ontario, he joined Ferry Command and spent the rest of the war flying Catalinas from Carolina to Russia, a job made even more difficult by the Russians who insisted on tight formation-flying at all times.

Sir John Junior



Opportunity Knocks: Green (centre) at his last show, 1976, with some of his discoveries. From left: Freddie Davies, Lena Zavoron, Frank Carson (above), Green, Mary Hopkins, Les Dawson

After the war, a return to entertainment seemed difficult. He made a try in 1945 on Canadian Radio, but the best thing about the *Hughie Green Comedy Show* was an early encounter with a supporting cast consisting of the young Bernard Braden and Barbara Kelly. After a couple of small film roles, *If Winter Comes* (1947) in Hollywood and *Paper Orchid* in England (1948), he put up the idea for a new type of amateur talent show to BBC radio.

This was given a try by go-ahead young producer, Dennis Main Wilson, and from 18 February 1949 *Opportunity Knocks* was on the air, starring "Your Master of Opportunities, Hughie Green!" Assisted by a small part film actor, Pat McGrath, and introducing big-time film star Sheila Sim as the show's first star talent spotter, the series got off to a fine start by creating at least two stars-to-be, Jean Bayliss and Louis Trall. In time, would come forth such luminaries as Louise Gainsborough, The Kordites, and a trumpet impersonator called Spike Milligan. Green was equally frank about his rejects, who included the

singing star Alma Cogan, and Tony Hancock.

The difference between "Opportunity" as it came to be called, and its pre-war rival, Carroll Levis's *Discoveries*, was that each new

personality was introduced by his or her independent discoverer, someone who thought they were worth giving a chance. By the end of the first series, Green and his producer had travelled 20,000 miles, auditioned 4,000 acts, and broadened 165 of them.

From 1950, the show transferred to Radio Luxembourg, sponsored by Horlicks. Tomorrow's stars were accompanied by Cyril Stapleton and his Orchestra and winners, voted for by listeners, were rewarded with a professional booking on *A Date with Steve Race*, sponsored perhaps unfortunately by Airwick Deodorant. Green was given a new appellation, "Mirth Master", for a second series he devised for commercial radio. This was *Double Your Money*, which began on Luxembourg on 5 October 1954. The first winners were newlyweds, Mr and Mrs Smith, who worked their way through the six questions asked

them until they hit the top cash money prize of no less than £32. This time the sponsor was Lucozade.

The arrival of Independent Television was a manna from heaven for Green, his intimate, confident style coming straight through the screen into your face in big, beaming, winking close-ups that still managed to enthral the invisible studio audience, who screamed with a delight not too many decibels

down from the uproar we are treated to today. *Double Your Money* was first on the independent air on 26 September 1955. Prizes still started at £1 and worked their way up to £2, but the big addition was the "Treasure Trail"; this topped off at less than £1,024, an unheard-of sum in British give-away shows.

To compete, one had to return week by week, doubling up the money prize each time. Although many would win, the most famous did not. This was Plantagenet Somerset Fry whose chosen subject was history. He quit at £512, much to the rage of the audience, not to mention his own when he discovered he could have answered the £1,024 question correctly!

The following year Green brought *Opportunity Knocks* to ITV starting 13 June. This time there was a top cash prize of £400 or a trip to New York. A visual "Clapometer" measured audience applause, but the winner was decided by a viewers' vote.

Many national stars were born from this long-running series, including over the years Les Dawson, Russ Abbott, Freddie Starr, Frank Carson, Little and Large, Tom O'Connor and Bonnie Langford. The show was revived in 1964, and again in 1989. This time, the BBC bought the format and rechristened it *Bob Says Opportunity Knocks*, starring a certain Mr Monkhouse.

This was a half-hearted "all is forgiven, but not quite" from Green's long-standing opposition. In 1950, Green, the man with as much of an ego as he had a right to, dared to take the great corporation to court. He was convinced that after the initial success of his *Opportunity Knocks*, corruption had prevented his contract from being renewed, in favour of Carroll Levis and his *Discoveries*. It took five years to get to court, but even with

Lord Hailsham in his defence he lost. Green was bankrupted by the costs. He went back to flying and eventually, thanks to the independent radio and television companies, shot back to the top of the British entertainment tree.

But the loss of his bitter BBC battle was not a lesson. He remained a determined and independent man. In 1978, he started another big legal battle against certain overseas television companies swiping his *Opportunity Knocks* format without acknowledgement or payment of copyright. It took eleven years, and he lost; not even his Clapometer was considered his own property. Tragic? Perhaps, but not to Hughie Green. To him it was just a part of his life.

As he wrote at the end of his 1965 autobiography, *Opportunity Knocked*: "Just remember, I'm only an actor." I think he was much, much more – and I mean it most sincerely.

Denis Gifford

Hughie Green, actor and broadcaster, born London 2 February 1920; married Claire Wilson (one son, one daughter); died London 4 May 1997.



Junior in 1968: a gift for homespun invective, which he developed into an art form

from Fleet Street to play golf – Auchtermuchi they preferred their politicians to be male. But it was not long before the knack of writing about political personalities was moved on within months to writing on the "Cross-Bencher" column in the *Sunday Express*.

The column set standards for malicious political gossip and Junior soon joined the select club of Beaverbrook cronies, liable to be called in to make up dinner parties or simply to provide or listen to ideas. He was even provided with a house on the Beaverbrook estate. In 1951, Junior was promoted to assistant editor and chief leader writer of the *Daily Express*, and after a brief stint as editor of the *London Evening Standard*, he became editor of the *Sunday Express* in 1954.

He edited the paper for a long time before he took over the column which made him his own most celebrated contributor.

He started writing it, as it

happens, at almost precisely the time that the Tory party chose Margaret Thatcher as its leader.

The initiative for the first meet-

ing between them came not

from him, but from her, or at least from her entourage.

Her public relations adviser,

Gordon Reece, arranged a lunch with Junior at the Boulestin restaurant. Junior regarded himself as a connoisseur of the Tory politicians at the time, but at the initial lunch he did not find the future Prime Minister over-impressive: in

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could be generous in his summing-up of some politicians. "Of all the people around Mrs Thatcher," he wrote in 1990, "I have not the slightest doubt which one, in a perfidious world, I would choose as her successor, Geoffrey Howe." But Junior never traded on his judgement. It was his gift for homespun invective, which seemed particularly appropriate to the Thatcherite years.

The John Junior brand of rudeness was one of the more notable characteristics of public life in the Eighties: in the Nineties, no longer editor of the *Sunday Express*, he moved his column to the *Mail on Sunday*, a pupil that he shared with Julie Burchill. It was the Old next to the New Testament. Junior, a heavy, thickset man of a folksy appearance, might had his finger on the nation's pulse, but he also got on its nerves.

Julian Critchley

John Donald Brown Junior, journalist: born Glasgow 15 January 1919; Assistant Editor, Daily Express 1951-53; Deputy Editor, Evening Standard 1953-54; Editor, Sunday Express 1954-86; Columnist 1973-89; Director, Beaverbrook (later Express) Newspapers 1960-86; K1 1980; Columnist, Mail on Sunday 1990-97; author of The Best of JJ 1981. Listening for a Mid-night Tram 1990; married Pamela Welsh (one son, one daughter); died 3 May 1997.

Births, Marriages & Deaths

IN MEMORIAM

DONWELL Freda, died 5 May 1993. Announcements for GAZETTE, MARRIAGES & DEATHS may be telephoned to 0171-293 2012 or faxed to 0171-293 2010, and are charged at 16.50 a line (VAT extra).

Changing of the Guard. The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am; No 7 Company Coldstream Guards mounts the Queen's Guard at Buckingham Palace, 11am; band provided by the Irish Guards.

director, Woolworth, 59; The Right Rev Gordon Wheeler, Roman Catholic Bishop Emeritus of Leeds, 87; Mr John Whicker, cricketer, 55; Professor Sir Gianni Vattimo, historian and former chairman, American Monuments Board (Wales), 77; Miss Shirley Wynter, singer, 55; Mr Gerard Young, former Lord Lieutenant of South Yorkshire, 57.

Junior's father came from the Highlands, but Junior himself was born in Glasgow, in a tenement building in Lordhill. Years later, when he wanted to delight his readers with an idealised community with all the homely Scottish virtues, he picked not on Scotland but on the town of Auchtermuchi, which sounds fictional but is in fact an undistinguished little place in Fife. Junior liked to call there when he went north

to play golf – Auchtermuchi is conveniently on the road to St Andrews. The Auchtermuchi imagination warmed the heart of every *Sunday Express* reader. It was a place where the lasses were pretty, the lads were lusty, and there was short shrift for "woofers and poofers". No man in Auchtermuchi ate queche.

Junior's early ambitions leaned more towards politics than journalism. At Glasgow University he joined the Liberal Party and became president of the University Liberal Club. In 1939, he found himself picked for the kind of mission most of us think of as taking place in fiction. He was signed on, at the then not inconsiderable salary of £4 a week, by the fabulously rich and highly personable Lady Glen-Coots, a Liberal activist, as her private secretary, to go on a fact-finding tour of Hitler's Germany. The couple were only just able to get a train out of Germany before the Second World War started on 3 September. Later, Junior was to stand unsuccessfully three times for Parliament in the Liberal interest.

Junior came to the notice of the newspaper magnate Lord Beaverbrook soon after the war, the latter stages of which Junior spent editing the Fleet Air Arm's magazine, *Fly Deck*. By 1946 he was working as a reporter on Beaverbrook's *Daily Express*. "I discovered

that place near North Bend, Ohio, took place near North Bend, Ohio, in excavation of the Corinth Canal in Greece began 1882; Amy

1883; Lord Beaverbrook,

business & city

Business news desk: tel 0171-293 2686 fax 0171-293 2098
BUSINESS & CITY EDITOR: JEREMY WARNER

As the new Chancellor prepares to meet Eddie George, Labour sends out a positive signal on the single currency

Brown set to accept case for rate rise

Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

Interest rates are likely to rise after Gordon Brown meets Eddie George, Governor of the Bank of England, on Wednesday. But the new Chancellor will face intense lobbying from industry to avoid any further rate rises as long as the pound stays so strong.

A business survey published today by the Institute of Directors confirms that the squeeze on export orders due to the pound's rise is being more than offset by buoyant home orders. The employers' group says it favours an interest rate rise to head off higher inflation.

It also joins the growing consensus that Mr Brown should use his first Budget to raise taxes too – although not for the purpose of fine-tuning the economy, but rather to fill some of the holes in the public finances.

The Bank of England is firmly expected to recommend an increase of a quarter to a half point in interest rates to trim the pace of growth and keep inflation on course for the 2.5 per cent target. The Chancellor is widely expected to agree.

Stephen Davies, the economist, said: "The idea that you can fine-tune fiscal policy to compensate for the exchange rate is absolutely ludicrous.

The argument for higher taxes is based on the unsatisfactory fiscal position."

Although government borrowing is falling rapidly as the economy booms, many experts believe it should be even lower to satisfy the "golden rule" – the new Government has pledged to meet. This says that over the course of the business cycle, borrowing will not exceed public sector investment.

Meeting it early would imply a £700-£1000 increase in the tax

The onus shouldn't just be on raising rates. Taxes also have a role to play

burden on future increases inherited from Kenneth Clarke's last Budget.

The IoD survey confirms the picture of a two-speed economy. It reports that company performance has increased in the latest quarter, with output up and little change in orders.

Business and non-business services are the most buoyant sectors. They reported improved optimism, and the biggest increases in output and employment. They also saw the strongest increases in costs and prices, which were stable in other sectors.

Yet export orders have fallen, and there has been a decline in business optimism. Export orders in manufacturing have been particularly badly affected.

Regulator steps in to settle battle over who runs trains

Randeep Ramesh
Transport Correspondent

The rail regulator, John Swift QC, will settle the first fight for slots on Britain's privatised rail network later this month.

South Wales and West, run by former bus executives at Prism, and Virgin's Cross Country have both put in proposals to run trains from Penzance to Manchester and Portsmouth to Liverpool this summer.

However, the number of train "slots" mean that only one company will succeed. Virgin, which already runs a direct service, claims that SWW will not be

able to generate enough ticket sales on the Manchester to Penzance route to warrant a train, and points out that passengers can already use the route on SWW if they change at Newport.

SWW has hit back, saying its plans would allow travellers from Shrewsbury and Hereford to use the Manchester link. The rail regulator, who rules on competition issues, was asked to intervene after the matter could not be resolved through arbitration.

He will also have to give a verdict on SWW's plans to run "in the near future" a Manchester to London Waterloo service, which is also contested by Cross Country.

What is not in dispute is that the new services would generate revenue for train companies because of the way passenger proceeds are divided up between operators. The system, called the Orca model, dishes out revenue to operators that stop at certain stations – regardless of how many passengers a train might pick up.

Competition for the nation's rail revenue between train operators has meant many companies are lining up to scratch rivals' traditional station stops from them. Commuter towns

such as Huntingdon in Cambridgeshire are being targeted by railway operators, as any train stopping there would be entitled to a slice of the substantial revenue generated.

Although figures from Association of Train Operating Companies, which represents the interests of all the 25 operators, show that there has been an 8 per cent "real" increase in passenger revenue to £2.7bn, many managers have set ambitious targets to make money for their companies. The issue could prove tricky for Labour ministers who opposed the splitting up of British Rail.

Competition for the nation's rail revenue between train operators has meant many companies are lining up to scratch rivals' traditional station stops from them. Commuter towns

Hambros and law firm await legal move

Hambros Bank and the City law firm Travers Smith Braithwaite should learn this week whether they face the prospect of legal action over their role in Andrew Regan's bid for the Co-op.

The liquidator of Galileo, the vehicle used for the abortive bid, is actively considering the possibility. Jason Elles, the liquidator for Ernst & Young, said he was still considering whether Galileo had received misleading advice, and whether losses to its shareholders had been the fault of the advisers.

An Ernst & Young spokesman said yesterday: "The review is taking place. The liquidator

and his advisers are looking at the whole circumstances and the review will take some time and until it is complete there will be no decisions.

Wilde Sapte, the solicitors, are advising the liquidator as part of the overall review. "When the review is completed and if there is evidence legal action should be taken, then we will pursue that matter."

Galileo went into solvent liquidation on Wednesday after a meeting of the Galileo board to wind up the company with the agreement of the shareholders.

The spokesman confirmed that Andrew Regan and his ad-

viser, David Lyons, were co-operating with the inquiry.

Hambros and Travers Smith Braithwaite last week sent letters of apology to the Co-operative Wholesale Society, and paid the CWS an undisclosed sum. The CWS accepted the apology and subsequently dropped its planned legal claims.

Hambros' letter admitted that its judgement had been "below standard". Confidential CWS documents had been used in preparing the bid, and had circulated widely around the City.

Wilde Sapte is examining the papers for Ernst & Young to determine whether or not Galileo's shareholders, including Jupiter Asset Management, Schroders and Killick & Co, would have a case.

Mr Justice Lightman last week described the use of the confidential information as a "gross, willful and disgraceful breach of confidence". Hambros' part in circulating the CWS material was described in the High Court.

Hambros has suspended one executive, Peter Large, subject to an investigation. News of his fate and that of others on the finance team advising Galileo could also emerge this week.



In the queue: The Post Office wants at least a partial privatisation to enable it to compete more effectively

Beckett could dash Post Office hopes for commercial freedom

Michael Harrison

The appointment of Margaret Beckett as the President of the Board of Trade could dash the Post Office's hopes of greater commercial freedom or even partial privatisation under the new Labour government.

Mrs Beckett is regarded in industry quarters as an "old Labour" figure who would be more reluctant to allow an infusion of private sector funding into the Post Office, much less a full-blooded sale of the business.

Post Office executives have drawn up a range of privatisation proposals and discussed them with senior Labour figures before the election.

Two options have been studied. One is to sell 49 per cent of the Post Office, thus keeping it in public ownership, but at the same time giving it commercial freedom to raise money on the financial markets and enter joint ventures with private sector partners.

The second, more radical, option is to sell a 51 per cent stake in the Post Office but retain a "golden share". This would enable Labour to ring-

fence monopoly services such as the Royal Mail and guarantee a universal service to every address in the country at a uniform price.

As a first step along the road to privatisation, the Post Office could be reconstituted as a 100 per cent government-owned company. This would free it from Treasury spending rules, giving it the freedom to fight growing competition from overseas post offices and private mail firms such as DHL, TNT and Federal Express.

Although Mrs Beckett might oppose Post Office privatisation, Labour sources pointed out that the key player in any decision would be Gordon Brown, the new Chancellor.

A flotation of the Post Office could raise at least £2bn towards the "black hole" in the public finances.

Mr Brown is conducting a "national inventory" of state assets which will lead to the privatisation of any assets no longer needed. Labour has also said it will examine the sale of Parcelforce.

Kim Howells, the member of Labour's trade and industry team with responsibility for the

Post Office, favours "commercialisation" of the Post Office, including the introduction of private capital.

Post Office chiefs have cautioned against piecemeal sales, arguing that Parcelforce should be kept intact and sold along with Royal Mail and the Coopers network.

The Post Office made a profit of £422m in 1995-96 and in the

current financial year is budgeted to contribute £330m to government finances through its external finance limit (EFL). A 100 per cent sale could raise £4bn. But a more attractive solution might be to give it commercial freedom and then sell a half stake. This could raise £2bn instantly but give Labour a continuing stream of income through the EFL.

Most observers believe that the Government will not seek to take the UK into the single currency in the first wave, but the choice of a pro-monetary union business adviser would certainly encourage hopes of

independence through the EFL.

Along with Niall Fitzgerald, chairman of Unilever, Sir David is regarded as one of the strongest supporters in the business community of the single Euro-project.

In a recent pamphlet published by the Blairstone Centre for European Reform, of which he is a trustee, he wrote: "A single currency, introduced at the appropriate time, will reduce costs for businesses that trade or invest across Europe, as well as giving Britain a better chance of sustaining a sound monetary policy and low inflation."

Some of Labour's own economic advisers have private reservations about the plan for a minimum wage, but none believe the Social Chapter will be damaging to business.

Sir David is expected to make his decision about whether to take up the offer of a government position within the next few days.

Doug Henderson was appointed Minister for Europe yesterday.

Blair offers pro-Europe BP boss a job

Diane Coyle

Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade, said yesterday: "We need to give Britain new leadership, and to drive for the early completion of the single market."

She said that the Government's policies towards Europe would be tailored to business needs.

"I want us to have the benefits of stable and co-operative relations between employers," Mrs Beckett said. "The Social Chapter and the national minimum wage are tools we should



In discussions: Sir David Simon is reluctant to quit BP

use to help us achieve this."

Robin Cook, Foreign Secretary, said yesterday that Britain would immediately take the first steps towards signing the Social Chapter.

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BE PART OF A £70
BILLION MARKET WITH
NO COMPETITION?

Mediation and debt
negotiating is one of the world's
fastest growing yet unknown
business areas. Offering
exceptional income potential
and no competition.

Associate, £25,000
per week
Recently a Valcor Associate
earned £25,000 for only three
weeks work helping a client
negotiate his problem debts.

Mediation average £3,500
per week

Whilst we take reasonable
presentations with all
advertisements, readers are
strongly advised to take
professional advice before
paying a deposit or entering
into any financial commitment.

Whilst nothing to lose, your client
simply can't afford our
services.

Lead Generation Program

This market is huge - you can
earn yourself lots of extra
income in this area. A one
time £9,000 + VAT fee covers
the cost of training and 6
months support. It also
includes manuals, forms,
contracts, worksheets, software
- our full copyright system.
Our client discounts negotiated.

£1,000 deposit is required.

£1,000 weekly fee.

